MUSEUMS AND MUSIC : AN ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF A BROADER EVALUATION OF THE OBJECT-BASED NATURE OF MUSIC COLLECTIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

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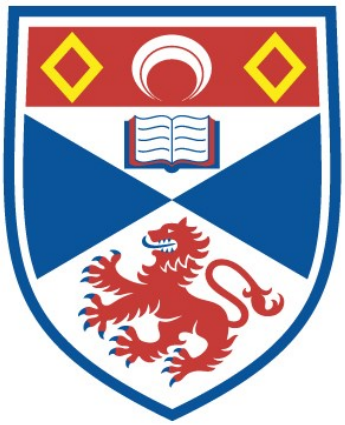

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Museums and Music: An argument in favour of a broader evaluation of the object-based nature of music collections in the United Kingdom.

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ABSTRACT

This work seeks to show that the experience gained through music in its practical and aural sense is not represented adequately in music museums because of the necessarily object-based nature of most museum displays. Restricting the analysis to museums - or their equivalent - in the United Kingdom, a representative cross-section of different museums containing music collections is studied. This material is discussed in terms of type, display, interpretation and visitors.

Music's problematic standing in museums is subsequently ascribed to its essentially non-visual and transitory nature. A further series of case study museums is then examined - dealing with Film, Theatre, Sport and 'Conceptual Experiences' as subjects - each of which share elements of music's difficulty in presentation. From this, it is shown that many of these difficulties may be overcome; and some of the solutions may be adapted for musical material in both a practical and ideological sense.

I, Joanna Archibald, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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For Dad, Mum and Charles

'If you can't feel it in your knees, you ain't got it.'

[Traditional Jazz expression.]

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INTRODUCTION

The idea for this work grew out of two beliefs: firstly, that most people will at some time listen to or participate in making music and secondly, that museums should reflect the interests and creative pursuits of society through their collections. Museums also have a duty to collect and interpret their material culture for the *public benefit* ; and so, by combining these beliefs, the question is raised regarding how well music is presented in our museums: In what ways do our museums choose to represent music and how is this accomplished?

The decision to look at music in a museological context was instigated by the combination of a first degree in music followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Museum Studies. In 1990, a project to research a *spitzharfe* belonging to St Andrews University made me acutely aware of the scarcity of information regarding music collections in museums; a situation further exacerbated by the realisation that although I was a keen musician, I could think of only a handful of music collections in museums. Intrigued by this, I began to search out music collections and in so doing became concerned that the subject was such a neglected one. The number of museums with important musical holdings was surprising; but, typically, these collections were highly predictable in their display and interpretation, tending to be specialist and genre-based and presenting narrow facets of music rather than attempting to capture the whole subject. My initial reaction was therefore highly critical; and it was only when I tried to put myself in the place of these museums that I became aware of music's nightmare proportions in museum terms: theoretically, it has too much breadth and too many facets to ever be perfectly presented.

To explore music's situation, three themes underpin the work in this thesis: the state of music collections in the United Kingdom; why music is such a difficult subject to present; and the possible solutions for the future.

Initially I began to study this subject for the degree of M.Litt (in 1991), but subsequently transferred it to a Ph.D degree when the scope of the material involved became apparent. Inevitably, over this four-year period some changes have taken place in the museums studied, but where possible I have tried to keep the information as up- to-date as possible, and have sometimes (as in the case of the Horniman Museum), used this time difference to produce a 'before' and 'after' account of a museum.

It appeared to me that, in essence, music is such a difficult subject to represent in a museological context because it is the antithesis of the traditional museum collection, concerned with displaying *physical* and *visible* objects; while music in its proper sense is both *transient* and *non-visual*. It is therefore understandable why many museums seem only to present music in terms of the subject's physical manifestations in the form of instruments or manuscripts. Museums have limited themselves by adopting such a narrow definition of music; and in so doing have alienated a musically voracious public, to whom the majority of the collections are of little interest. A successful relationship between museums and the public is crucial however, and I believe that the way to achieve this is to persuade museums to break away from the solely 'object-based' approach fixated-upon at present, in order to become more truly representative of music as a museum topic. It is suggested that this might be achieved by examining the ways in which other 'difficult' museum genre dealing with non-visual or transient material treat their collections. The realisation that music is not the only subject to encounter such unique problems inspires the second part of this thesis, from which it is

possible to learn of new or alternative attitudes and approaches which could be adopted by music collections.

Methodology

The thesis divides naturally into two parts: the first part (Chapters 1-5) examines music collections and the state of museums in the present day, whilst the second part (Chapters 6-9) is concerned with a series of comparable museum types, and the implications this might have for the future.

Chapters 1-5: Music Museums

The museums discussed here were chosen to be representative of the music museums or museums with a particular interest in musical subjects, found in the United Kingdom. It would not have been feasible within the time-scale of this work to have attempted a comprehensive analysis of, or visit to, the nearly hundred or so museums of musical interest; therefore a *cross-section* was chosen in the hope that such a method would result in a balanced overview of the nature of such music collections. Whilst being aware of many international music museum practices, I have restricted this work to an analysis of museums in the United Kingdom, and make reference to other museums only if they are of a special interest.

After compiling as exhaustive a list as possible of all suitable museums,[1] thirteen museums from across the country were selected in terms of being representative of the different categories of museum in which a music collection would be found.[2] It will be seen that each of these museums has its own distinctive character and so

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[1]See Appendix B for list of United Kingdom museums with musical collections.
[2]See Appendix A for a synopsis of these museums.

I have tried to examine each museum in its own right. For convenience, the museum in question may be placed in a 'category' but it is realised that within any category the differences between museums can often outweigh the similarities; music museums perceive their collections in very individual ways. Indeed, two of the collections examined are not technically museums at all: Rock Circus and Balnain House have been included because they shed valuable light upon the treatment of musical subjects in a non- museological context.

The thirteen representative museums are:

Balnain House: Highland Music Resource Centre

The British Library exhibition 'Mozart: Prodigy of Nature'

The British Museum

Paul Corin's Magnificent Music Machines

Gloucester Folk Museum

The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum

The Horniman Museum

The National Sound Archive

The Ranger's House ('The Dolmetsch Collection')

Rock Circus

Royal County Museum of Cornwall exhibition 'The Age of Mozart'

The University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments

The Victoria and Albert Museum

Each of the above thirteen museums was visited and studied in detail. Where possible, arrangements were made to discuss the individual collections with the particular curators or management staff involved. In addition, aside from these core museums, all of the remaining museums contained on the primary list were contacted by means of a simple questionnaire, outlining my research and requesting information on the 'style' of the museum, its visitors, use of sound and

any future development plans. In this way, I amassed a substantial volume of up-to-date background information that could be used to make comparisons with my own findings in the core case-study museums. From eighty-seven questionnaires I received seventy-three replies.[3] Many of these additional museums were visited subsequently; where possible I have always tried to describe museums from first-hand experience.

Chapters 1 to 5 are thematic, based on concerns arising from my visits to the thirteen core museums. The first chapter is devoted to a definition of 'music museum', examining what these museums believe their function to be, while the second chapter looks at the 'type' of visitor they are trying to attract. Chapters 3 and 4 are more practically oriented, relating to the substance of the music collections themselves. In this, 'music' is viewed from two different perspectives: Chapter 3 examines the music collection in its concrete form as 'objects', while Chapter 4 discusses the idea of music as *sound* within the museum environment. Throughout, I have chosen to view things from the perspective of the *visitor* rather than the curator, in the belief that such a study - from the outside looking in - to be ultimately more illuminating. Chapter 5 acts as a pivotal point in this work, outlining the problems faced by music collections, before then moving-on in Chapters 6-9 to discuss how other museums cope with these difficulties.

Although these chapters are thematic, it has not been my intention to enter into an examination of each of the thirteen museums in every chapter. Instead, I have selected usually a specific three or four museums from the list that I believe will best illustrate the particular theme under discussion.

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[3]See Appendix B for list of museums receiving and answering questionnaires.

Chapters 6 - 9

Each of these chapters is devoted to a non-musical museum which shares with music a subject category that is either (or both) non-visual or transitory in nature. An extensive list of possible subjects was narrowed down to four categories:

Chapter 6 Photography, Film and Television.

Chapter 7 Theatre and Performing Arts.

Chapter 8 Sport.

Chapter 9 'Concept' Museums

Having established these groups, it seemed logical to use the same procedure employed for the analysis of the music museums, by compiling an exhaustive list of all relevant establishments; some museums were chosen for detailed study and the rest contacted through questionnaire or visit. In this case, each questionnaire was tailored to suit the individual category of museum receiving it, eliciting a response of fifty-nine replies out of eighty-one enquiries.[4] As with the music museum questionnaires, the literature received ranged from single word answers to sizeable amounts of supplementary material. Once again, these museum collections and one-off displays were chosen to be a representative cross-section of their particular genres. The twelve chosen core museums are:

'The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century', City Art Centre, Edinburgh

The British Photographic Museum

The Museum of the Moving Image

The Theatre Museum

The Shakespeare Globe Theatre Museum

Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum

Lords Cricket Ground Tour and Museum

The British Golf Museum

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[4]See Appendix B for list of museums receiving and answering questionnaires.

The Story of Telecommunications

The Science Museum

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

The Guinness World of Records [5]

References

Written material on the subject of music in museums is scarce, and background information can only be gleaned carefully from museum guidebooks, pamphlets and occasional articles in newspapers and museum journals. Scholarly musical periodicals (such as The Galpin Society and CIMCIM publications) provide more comprehensive coverage, but their interest is with musical *instruments* in museums rather than the concept of music in its wider sense with which this work is concerned. Indeed, it is usual for museums and curators to think of music only in terms of its instruments.

In conjunction, I have used three main sources of information:

i) *Musical Instrument Collections in the British Isles*, edited by Clifford Bevan (Piccolo Press, Winchester, 1990), which provided a primary source for finding instrumental collections.

ii) The Museums and Galleries Commission's *Museums of Music: A Review of Musical Collections in the United Kingdom* by Kate Arnold-Forster and Hélèn La Rue, (HMSO, 1993).

In 1991, when I began my own research into this subject, it was not known that the Museums and Galleries Commission were also intending to start an examination into the long-neglected subject of music museums. When this was realised, I contacted the Commission and received from them a copy of their 'draft

[5]See Appendix A for list and synopsis of museum case studies.

brief', which stressed the need to establish reliable information about the range and scope of musical collections in the United Kingdom. Although our premise was the same, however, we differed in that the Museums and Galleries Commission's *Review* had decided to focus upon the *curator's* rather than the *visitor's* interpretation of musical material. Subsequently, the *Review's* principal outcome is the intention to publish guidelines on standards of care for musical instruments; to run the first-ever course dealing with preventative conservation of instruments; and to establish a network for United Kingdom-based curators.[6] Naturally, this will help to create better displays and approaches towards the collections in the future, but my own concern has been with the treatment of music as it stands *today* in museums, and how the visitors are affected by it. The MGC report did not look at any types of museum collection other than those of musical instruments. It touches briefly upon sound archives but does not consider Birthplace museums, special exhibitions or any other non object-based musical material.

iii) Information gathered from the 1994 annual ICOM (*Comité International des Musées et Collections d'Instruments de Musique*) Conference for curators of musical instruments, Edinburgh 1st-9th June and the *Symposium on Musical Instrument History* (the Galpin Society and the Historic Brass Society), Edinburgh 10th-13th June 1994. The CIMCIM meeting included papers and museum visits on a wide compass of museological topics. I was also able to participate in working groups discussing the following areas: 'Documentation', 'Education and Exhibition', 'Conservation', 'Training' and 'Publications'.

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[6]These procedures are now well underway: Guidelines on 'Standards of Care' were published in 1994; the MGC 'Conservation Unit Course' *Caring for Musical Instruments* was held in London 31st July - 1st August 1994; and a 'Curators Network' is being established (1994) through the newly established *Musical Collections Forum.*

Definitions:

Below are definitions of several key words and terms, as I use them in the text:

Music Unless otherwise stated, this is used to mean music in its *active* sense - i.e. sound in combination with performance to produce a musical event.

Music Collection Refers to a collection devoted to a musical subject (e.g. instruments, scores, sound archive, birthplace museum, items in a special exhibition dealing with a musical subject). It is *not* synonymous with 'instrumental collection'.

Classical Music Unless otherwise stated, this refers to the generic term for this style of music and not music from the 'Classical' period.

object-based Refers to displays dealing only with static, physically tangible items.

transitory Something that is not permanent. Implies a gradual change or evolution in its nature. Transitory can be applied to visual things (watching a film or going to a live performance) as well as to the non-visual (musical sound, scientific concepts).

non-visual Anything that is not a concrete object. Music in its proper-sense is always non-visual.

'Concept' Museum Describes a museum which defines its collection in terms of an idea or concept rather than a physical fact - e.g. a 'Museum of Childhood' rather than a 'Museum of Childhood Toys'.

The Importance of Music

Before beginning to scrutinise any individual musical case studies in detail, I believe that it is necessary to examine our appreciation of music in its most general sense. How we listen to and experience music is fundamental to the understanding of any forms of the subject because it has a direct bearing upon what we choose to collect and display in our musical museums. The cry for music curators to be 'furthering the promotion of a national strategy for collecting, conservation and the preservation of musical material', [7] must be seen in the light of a great disparity - or diverse richness - of musical material. The terminology 'musical material' rather than 'musical instruments' is also telling, hopefully implying a more comprehensive and aural definition of the subject in the future.

Although music is a broad church, like most museums the choice of what to collect - or what is deemed of importance - is highly selective. Music museums usually have specialised collections of well-established and documented musical categories, but these are predominately of Western Art Music, leaving other substantial areas of the subject unaccounted for. Understandably, it is the historic Western Art collections that form the majority of our musical holdings. There may also be notable ethnomusicological and folk collections but it is with the Western body of material that the public associates musical collections. However, it is not enough to simply re-focus attention onto the less well-known areas. It is

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[7]Kate Arnold-Forster and Hélène La Rue, *Museums of Music*, p.70.

important for museums to realise that before they can expand upon their non-Western Art Music holdings they must find ways of reconciling the public to their established Western collections. To accomplish this, museums must become more aware of how the public views classical music. Attitudes and expectations towards the classical repertoire have changed considerably over the past ten years especially; the best indicator of this change in musical fortunes being the recording industry's renewed interest in classical music: despite over ninety per cent of the record companies' revenue coming from sales of popular music, the classical market is a consistent and ever-expanding one. However, while pop music is seen as being always contemporary and progressive, classical music is seen as historical and finite; to give it definition it is marketed through *association* and *image*; and it is image that is all important. Museums have had to work diligently to rid themselves of an image of the museum as a dull, dusty place, and classical music in the recording industry is now following a similar path. The re-creation - or manipulation - of public perceptions is vital in order to re-introduce music collections. If music museums are to evolve, they must understand how attitudes are changing for a member of the general music-listening public.

Music and Status

> Should we reach the point where shop songs no longer appeal to his nervous system, his intellect or his soul, he will find himself getting more tolerant towards what he has been accustomed to call 'high-brow' music....On the other hand, it is conceivable that a person who has been moved by indolence or mental debility, be reduced to a state in which he only likes the musical fare of the street.[8]

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[8]J.A.Fuller-Maitland, *The Spell of Music: An Attempt to Analyse the Enjoyment of Music*(London,1927),p.96.

The crux of the revolution in classical music lies in the concept of 'high' and 'low' culture. Museums, as repositories of history and society must represent this in terms of a collection; however, what is and has been collected is highly selective and subjective. Traditionally, music museums have sought to show the most beautiful, rare or significant pieces, equating these with 'high' culture. Most of the major musical collections in this country fall into this scheme - large collections amassed by an enthusiast and subsequently bequeathed to a national or independent institution. There is nothing intrinsically wrong in this; it is the fact that for many years we have made this the criteria by which we collect - rare, antique and predominately Western instruments, instead of looking at music in any wider sense. Museums have mostly ignored modern musical concerns, partly because of the settled existence of historical collections but also, more worryingly, because of in-built prejudices that contemporary or non-Western Art Music is somehow not of the same cultural calibre and is therefore of less significance. No musical tradition or genre is inherently superior to any other, it is the social and cultural perspective we view them from which creates a pecking order in museums as elsewhere; with Western classical music at the pinnacle and folk, jazz, ethnomusicological and popular music represented in either highly specialised or single-item-as curiosity-value way. Nevertheless, it is not so much the size of these collections as the attitudes towards them that is of concern, and the hiatus in musical genres is still greatest between 'classical' and 'popular' music.

Culture is usually defined as being not just the artistic and intellectual product of a society but the *best* of that society, implying ideas of 'higher' and 'lower' culture. This is reflected, for example, in the way people will often define themselves and others by their taste in music. Popular music - although itself a growth out of classical, folk and jazz - is also a consumer product and as such prompts questions of whether as 'entertainment' it can ever be considered 'high' culture, or

if high culture must demand a more intellectual response. If so, then such a response requires a musical education and so historically, it is the musically knowledgeable who have defined the status of music from their own viewpoint. Classical music has always been elitist, part deliberately (the snob-value of high culture) and part involuntarily because it can be alien and unpopular with people who do not understand it. Even the labels of 'popular' and 'classical' music have an in-built implication that classical music is music that is not popular! For many people, pop music is seen as an entertainment while classical music is thought to be intellectual and improving. To consider it as entertainment immediately 'lowers' its status in classical terms and explains why in the museological hierarchy it has been placed upon a musical pedestal. Opera is the key example of this: it is the fusion of the arts and therefore at the top of the status tree. It has long had an elitist image, maintained by the exorbitant price of opera tickets and the cult of the opera singer. Luciano Pavarotti and Kiri Te Kanawa may be today's high culture equivalent of pop stars and be afforded the same cult status, but this is only because they have been marketed and promoted in a populist way.

Nevertheless, in spite of this, opera singers are classical music's exception rather than the rule; for many people classical music is still intimidating. In *The Effects of Music*[9], it is argued that our reaction to music is formed from native capacity coupled with experience and training; therefore training and experience (*listening*) increases our enjoyment of music. Also, the degree to which we enjoy unfamiliar music is shaped by the degree to which it can be recognised. If music museums have a duty to be stimulating and informative, then they must learn to entice a wary public into an appreciation of their established (if classically biased) collections through less obviously high-brow means. Museums need to become aware of what the majority of the population is actually listening to - pop music - and through it, show the connections and the evolution from a classical past: to

[9]Max Schoen, *The Effects of Music: A Series of Essays*(1927).

relate the collections to the musical genre most people understand. The most obvious bridge is in the phenomenon of the 'popular classics'. This is the principle used by the Classic FM radio station (in comparison to that of Radio Three), where its new listeners were weaned on a diet of well-known classical favourites to provide a reassuring familiarity, and only when its audience was established, began gradually to introduce more unusual material.

The success of *popular* classical recordings shows that there is a direct correlation between enjoyment of music and familiarity. Unfortunately, this also implies that people judge the quality of the music in direct proportion to the pleasure they take in listening to it. The process is further complicated by the cultural prejudices they bring to the music. Nor is musical snobbism confined to the classical versus popular debate. Classical composers and styles are just as liable to go in and out of musical fashion: the music of J.S. Bach was neglected for over a hundred years because of changing tastes, and Tchaikovsky's status continues to oscillate in the cultural charts even amongst classical music enthusiasts. Ultimately, all attempts to look at music are at heart subjective for 'We can never hear with each other's ears or really participate definitely in each other's delight in sound.'[10]

For this reason, the presentation of music as a subject in a museum is never a simple task. The difficulty with any form of music appreciation - more so with classical music - is that the visitor's understanding of the subject can cover many different levels of knowledge and experience. We are all victims of the inescapable musical conditioning of our environment, although most people will respond to the two most striking and fundamental aspects of music, namely a dominant rhythm and a clear melodic line.[11] The nuances of harmony, form, colour and instrumentation are secondary in importance and impact. Confusion

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[10]J.A. Fuller-Maitland, *The Spell of Music: An Attempt to Analyse the Enjoyment of Music*, p.76.

[11]This is understandable, for it forms the basis of most popular music.

arises when we ask the untrained or unaccustomed ear to appreciate each separate musical component rather than the overall sound of the music. Traditional classical works such as symphonies, concertos and operas can exacerbate the problem through appearing to be infinite in length and complexity in comparison to the short and compartmentalised songs and albums of the popular music scene. Much classical music is also instrumental and multi-lingual while pop is dominated by the English-speaking voice. The quality of enjoyment in listening to classical music may be the same for the tone-deaf individual as for the pitch-perfect musician, but the awareness of what forms music varies considerably. Further to this, our musical museum displays are overwhelmingly static and visual rather than practical and aural, further alienating the general listener from the subject. Explaining music of any type can involve complicated terminology and is often unconsciously associated with a high-brow musicology. Informing the general visitor that a trained ear can distinguish between Haydn and Mozart is not productive if the visitor feels, as many do, that 'all classical music sounds the same'. We can listen to pieces of music only in relation to other music we have heard; a good argument for persuading music museums to carefully note which classical recordings are being purchased and listened to. The person who bought a recording of 'Nessun dorma' from *Turandot* because he liked Pavarotti singing it as an anthem for the '1990 Football World Cup', may be encouraged to listen to other things by Pavarotti or Puccini *through association.*

Pavarotti's phenomenal success with the 'Nessun dorma' recording[12] is an excellent illustration of how classical music can be demystified by presenting high status music in a more casual and unexpected context. This is the same principle found behind the use of classical music in advertisements: it has an association with 'class' that helps to sell the product, while simultaneously exposing the unsuspecting public to snippets of classical works. It is

[12]The 1990 album was still in the record charts in 1994.

consumerism, but it is also an insidious education with the listener (or viewer) simply accepting and absorbing the background music rather than thinking 'I am listening to classical music'. This may have led to an association of classical works with cars, cigars and the insipid 'Muzak' of supermarkets which, from one perspective, lowers the music's status, but it is also a humanising process of the classical idiom for the general public in the same way that musicians give nick-names to favourite classical works instead of their opus numbers: Mozart K.551 is more approachable as the 'Jupiter Symphony'. When people are exposed to classical music, even in such a minor way, their understanding of it develops through familiarity; the more people experience a variety of musical styles, the easier it becomes for them to assimilate different types of music on their individual merits. In part, this is what has occurred with the cross-over by classical artists into the popular arena. The populist marketing blurs the boundaries between classical and pop implying a now accessible product, usually because of the familiarity engendered by saturation playing on radio and television. Ironically though, there is a paradox here, a see-saw effect whereby, if the general public buys a classical recording because it is 'high' culture, it is then lowered in value for the elitist musician (or museum) who may feel that its new-found accessibility actually lessens its cultural value.

The cross-over from classical performance takes two distinct forms: a move into a different medium (opera singers performing popular songs from musical shows) and the re-packaging of classical music to appeal to a pop market (Nigel Kennedy's version of Vivaldi's 'The Four Seasons'). The 1990 Football World Cup concert by the eponymous *Three Tenors* [13]has perhaps had the greatest impact of all; both operatic set-pieces and popular show-songs, a massive orchestra and stage setting reminiscent of pop concerts; hero-worship of the pop

[13]A name coined during the '1990 Football World Cup' referring to the tenors Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo and José Carerras.

star kind albeit in evening dress. The *Three Tenors* appear to have achieved the best of both worlds although they are careful not to overplay the 'trendy' image. By contrast, Nigel Kennedy's off-beat appearance and often unorthodox attitude towards the music he plays does not agree with the accepted persona of a classical musician. The highly marketable tearaway image combined with virtuoso playing of well-established classical works may have catapulted him to prominence and made a younger generation take notice, but at the cost of alienating many other established classical music listeners in the process. Nevertheless, it should be argued that there are benefits in provocation, if it encourages a new audience, and many people, from specialist to layman now have an opinion of Kennedy's style and music. His is a 'name' that even the most musically disinterested will have heard.

The Marketing of Classical Music

Music museums need to examine their objectives both in what they collect and in how they interpret it. It is not possible to separate music from its social and cultural roots. An attempt must be made to understand this, if museums are to be valid musically in a competitive and commercial world. In order to improve the display and interpretation of music collection, it is now vital to have an appreciation of how people listen to and experience music:

> The music which is being most widely disseminated and most widely discussed and therefore most widely imitated and influential, is that music which is available on records. The music that is only published is very little known.[14]

[14]Milton Babbitt, composer, c.1970.

The majority of people experience music either through buying records or listening to it on the radio and television. This is true of all Western musical genres, with concert-going and live performance contributing in only a minor way. The way we listen to music is inextricably bound to the development of the recording industry over the past century; an industry that is all-powerful and therefore manipulative in the extreme. It is not concerned with whether we derive the same aesthetic pleasure from a pop tune as a Schubert song as long as the recording sells well. It is comparatively easy to market contemporary pop songs; the style, content and choice of artist are the product of 'What the public wants', under control of production experts to create a sound that will be successful. With classical music the approach cannot be the same; the music already exists *historically* and cannot be artificially created to suit changing tastes. In the recent past of recording history, classical music has been treated as a specialist interest and correlated with 'class', culture and age groups of listening preferences. The gap between what was 'popular' and what was 'classical' was stressed, doing much to reinforce cultural prejudices and to disincline potential listeners. It has only been with the advent of 'classical-crossover' during the last ten years or so that the record companies have discovered a way to bridge the cultural divide in, as yet, an untapped vein of great potential.

The music industry is a highly competitive market where commercial concerns influence both the choice of what music is recorded and the style of performance. Pressure is placed upon classical artists, in particular, to produce the most brilliant, virtuoso, or controversial performance; to be *seen* to be deliberately breaking away from the accepted conservative style of classical recording. This is evident, for example, in the way record sleeves have changed: where once classical music was synonymous with a pastoral scene or performer in modest pose, stylised artwork and glamorously gowned divas are now increasingly common. In the current changing market for classical music the record album

charts are consistently filled with examples of classical works as the record industry builds itself classical equivalents of the pop superstars. The industry has often done this with individual *performers*, but increasingly and unexpectedly, it has also set its sights upon contemporary classical composers. Record labels now buy the rights to new compositions by John Tavener, Henryk Gorecki, Michael Nyman et al *before* they are written. This is significant, because of all genres, contemporary classical music is probably the most difficult to persuade people to listen to, presenting, as it does, an even greater aural challenge to an unaccustomed ear.

This reasoning would seem to present a stumbling block for the marketing of contemporary music, but it is one that record companies have overcome by combining the product (the music) with visual images. For an untrained ear perhaps used only to pop videos, accompanying pictures compensate and give a structure to the music through association. For example, Michael Nyman's music is recognised through his film scores rather than his concert pieces - would his minimalist style have as much appeal in the record market if his works had not been established visually first? Mozart's works are consistently popular with a large cross-section of the public; is this because of the intrinsic quality of the music or has it also something to do with the film *Amadeus* , the extensive use of his music in advertising and the marketing of him as a 'Great Composer'? Music museums must acknowledge that people do not always come to classical music through the most direct route, and so conversely, the interpretation of this music in a museum context might benefit from unorthodox thinking.

Music broadcasting is a further barometer of music marketing and changing tastes. In radio, listeners adhere passionately to a channel identity of 'pop music', 'light entertainment' or 'classical' types, often forcing 'minority' interests like folk or jazz music to flit between the stations. In 1992, the largest volume of letters

received by the BBC on a single topic was because of the anticipated changes to Radio Two's music policy: a scheme to introduce a new concentration on post-1950's music in order to encourage a younger audience. Established listeners (the survey showed an average age of sixty-one), complained vigorously: Was the station really responding to a changing listening audience or was it simply at the mercy of market forces? Radio Three also has not been immune from the call to popularise, but unlike Radio Two whose identity is essentially domestic, it has an intellectual image to maintain, with all of the cultural baggage that it implies:

> The controller has to defend whatever time he *does* devote to Schoenberg, Berio and Cage against those who argue scornfully that what they compose isn't really music, while simultaneously defending broadcasts of Beethoven's Fifth and the *William Tell* overture against those who dismiss such material as populist syrup with no place on a serious music station.[15]

Further, the planned changes for Radio Three in 1992 were suspiciously similar to those of the recently launched Classic FM Radio; shorter pieces more 'crisply' presented with information requiring less knowledge of technical terms or musical history. The new station was aimed at those who '...buy classical CDs or readily sit in the rain to hear Pavarotti but who may previously have found Radio Three forbidding'.[16] In many ways, these two radio stations mirror two different ways music museums interpret their collections; one for the specialist and one for the interested layman.

The up-dated Radio Three and Classic FM are the culmination of evolving attitudes towards classical music over the previous ten years. It is not surprising

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[15]Chris Dunkley 'Causing a Stir at Radio Three', *The Radio Times* (4.9.92), p.22.
[16]*Ibid.*

that these changes began during the commercial 1980s with its conscious aspirations towards the 'high-brow'; and natural that the record companies should register this interest, opening the floodgates for a whole series of popular classical recordings and new 'user-friendly' music magazines. Successful music sales create their own standards - with the popular and subsequently classical music charts creating rather than reflecting taste. In this scheme, if a work is a best-seller then it must be 'good' and 'good' music is indicated by the number of people buying that recording.

In this context, museums should be our indicators of reasoned balance, wherein music is presented in a scholarly but not elitist way. To achieve this, museums have to be aware of both the 'high-brow' and 'low-brow' ends of the market. If we reduce classical music to its most basic marketable unit, we are left with the compilation or 'themed' recording. Substantial numbers of people experience classical music in this way; but while these recordings are consistently high in the best-seller lists, opinions about them differ widely. At one extreme these classical 'lollipops' provide an opportunity to hear a wide variety of justifiably famous pieces from different musical periods, genres and composers, but it can also be argued that this takes the works out of context (playing only one movement of a symphony) and is stylistically confusing. A further development from this is the 'mood' tape, (*Classic Weepies, Stress Busters*), emphasising what the music can *do* for the listener. This is subjective marketing at its simplest, with a crude tendency to reduce the music to becoming only a means to an end: textual information about the music itself is usually scarce with mistakes in titles and dates of works found frequently.

Compilation and 'themed' recordings may have worked well to 'humanise' classical music for some people, but there is a negative side to this, when the music is sold in terms of a product or when the media image of a performing artist

deliberately dwarfs the music. Music sold as 'the theme from the Pure Wool advert' as found on the best-selling *Classic Adverts* recording is a danger because it inverts the true purpose of the music and in doing so it loses its identity. Museums should note that there will always be people who will buy a recording *because* it is by Pavarotti and not because it is of 'good' music, indeed it is sometimes not even necessary to know what the music will sound like at all; such is the power of marketing.

Implications for Music Museums

> Music is a cultural resource of mankind and not a hand-tool for the musician. Interest in the history of music does not restrict itself to the narrow circle of historians. We should remain concerned that music history does not lose its place...that it not trickle away into the dry streams of narrow professionalism.[17]

If music museums are to survive and develop, then it is not enough simply to re-display existing collections and introduce high-technology facilities. Instead, they need to encourage a change in attitude towards the interpretation of their collections in order to make them accessible to a wider listening public. It is unfortunate that for a music-loving nation, we have a curiously ambivalent attitude towards music when it is linked in any way with education. In schools, music has long been regarded as a 'minority' subject, one that is not of special importance or relevance. Traditionally - as is the case with museum music collections - music in schools has been grounded in Western history and analysis and only recently with the new 'GCSE Recommendations', have performance, composition and contemporary music been included seriously, in an attempt to find a more

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[17]Frederick Blume, *Musicology in the 1980s: Methods, Goals and Opportunities*, ed. Holoman & Palisca (New York, 1982), p.30.

comprehensive and exciting realisation of the subject. Museum displays should follow a similar route.

From this brief survey of the field of popular classical music, there appear to be three main areas in which music museums could develop a better understanding: first of all, in the diversity of visitors' musical appreciation when viewing a musical collection; secondly, in helping them to cultivate the art of listening; and finally, in turning the 'lure of popularity' to their own advantage.

Visitors will only learn to appreciate musical collections, if they are presented in a way that is accessible to them. The present bias towards Western Art Music prompts questions about what museums *should* collect for the future and how they should re-interpret their existing collections in a way that is more approachable. It is true that for most non-specialist visitors it is the *aural* aspect of music that is of greatest importance rather than the instruments, scores and biographical details of composers through which museums present 'music'. Therefore, access to the active *sound* of an instrument in a display should become a priority, whether through recordings, demonstrations or contextual performance. Museums should be using the *sound* of music as the starting point and *raison d'être* for any musical collection of artefacts, and not the other way round. In this way a musical exhibition can cultivate the art of listening through improved understanding of why instruments and scores *look* as they do.

The process of listening to classical music is a practice that museums must cultivate for the visitor in an age that is increasingly visual. We are so conditioned to being surrounded by music - whether by choice or not - in our everyday lives that we have become blasé about music and can find it difficult to really listen to something in depth. Museums with classical music collections have to compare themselves with the all-pervading music industry wherein music is invariably

presented with accompanying images on promotional videos, film and television. There is also the use of classical music in advertisements (although here the music is incidental) selling a product rather than itself. The treatment of classical music in the past was aural, the implication being that music of such high status did not require the equivalent of a pop promotional video. However, even this is changing. We need only to look at the number of people who bought the video version of the *Three Tenors'* 1990 Football World Cup concert to affirm the pull of the visual image. In terms of classical music, for many people *looking* makes *listening* easier and they will often *hear* more when they are visually stimulated. For example, to appreciate how an instrument works, it is one thing to see it in a display case with accompanying text, another to be able to hear its sound, but most understandable of all to *see* it being played.

Past collecting norms combined with musical elitism in part account for the alarming neglect of non-classical twentieth-century music in our museums. For the future, museums would do well not to underestimate the lure of popularity as they have in the past. This is not to suggest that these museums become the equivalent of 'theme parks', but rather that they use the increased interest in classical music (where their collections are strongest), as a focus for the re-evaluation of existing collections, by paying greater attention to social-historical context and perhaps with an opportunity to hear musical sounds. Museums *are* currently implementing ideas; they will be successful in this, if they learn to become aware of how ordinary people listen to music, instead of restricting it to an established academic viewpoint. It is now foolish to attempt to segregate classical music from all other genres, when it has become popular in a populist way; instead, it is important to look at this popularisation in a positive light. Musical appreciation grows as we experience more diverse musical styles; the problem then is not one of listening, so much as one of *persuading* to listen. Pop music holds sway because it is current; it is what the majority of people listen to, and as

such provides a strong active and collective identity in a way that the historically perceived 'classical' type does not. It is striking that when classical music does enter the public consciousness, it is usually when it has side-stepped its elitist tag in favour of a 'pop' style identity, as witnessed in the *Three Tenors'* concerts.

> ... popular music is popular not because it reflects something, or authentically articulates some sort of popular taste or experience, but because it creates our understanding of what popularity is.[18]

This then is the musical climate in which museums must work. The increasing popularity of classical music has coincided with a re-discovery of music in museums given the catalyst of the recommendations in the recent MGC *Review*. The important question to address now is of how museums should change: given the problematic nature of the subject, is it possible for music to be interpreted in a more dynamic, comprehensive and truly musical way?

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[18]Simon Frith, 'Towards an Aesthetic of popular Music', *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert & Susan McClary, p.137.

CHAPTER 1

MUSEUMS AND MUSIC: TYPES, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Music has been important to us since the earliest days of mankind; we have always devised ways to create sound, and by extension, the organised sound that is music. All musical instruments, manuscripts and recordings are a continuation of this overriding fascination we have with sound. Museums, in their turn have come to represent a catalogue of the history, beliefs and interests of people from all periods of time; a criterion which may be applied to *any* museum collection and therefore one we should apply to music in order to see how well it is represented. There are, however, a number of problems with such a simplistic approach, the two most obvious being that it requires a definition of 'music' and of what constitutes a 'collection'.

What is a 'Music Collection'?

'Music' is a specific and at the same time vague term, so that any museum with a 'music collection' may in theory consist of any sort of collection connected with music: there are dozens of possibilities. The underlying idea that links these diverse collections - though it is often ignored - is that music is a form of *expression*; it is conceptual and a social ritual for performers, an audience, and their interaction. The 'objects in cases' in museums are the product of a basic need to both create and listen to music. However, a dilemma arises in that while music is an *active* pursuit, museums have to deal with it through its *material* culture. Further, a distinction should be drawn between a 'Museum of Music' or 'Music Museum' and a 'Museum with a Music Collection', for there are subtle differences inherent in these titles implying the status and scope of the collection. While the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments is definitely a

'Museum of Music' or 'Music Museum' and the British Museum is a 'Museum with a Music Collection', the ethnographic Horniman Museum can be referred to, as both. The only advantage of the loose terminology 'Music Collection' is that - like 'Science Museum' - it can cover a multitude of component parts, although in general, music collections tend to be thematic with an underlying collecting policy. Total comprehensiveness in music collecting is a task beyond the scope of any of the museums considered here; most are defined in terms of specific musical genre and so an eclectic approach to the subject would not be of benefit to them.

A 'collection' by definition can be made up of three items or of three thousand; like 'music', it is an all-embracing term covering collections as diverse as the forty-odd instruments in Gloucester Folk Museum to the two thousand owned by Edinburgh University. Collections may vary in size as they do in character, so that a feature is made of the wealth and variety found in United Kingdom musical collections. The best museums look upon this as an exciting prospect rather than a restrictive one; but it is still necessary to have some common definition of what constitutes a music collection. In this, the 1993 Museums and Galleries Commission's *Review* and its 'Recommendations' highlighted the predicament of music collections. Music may be powerful and pervasive in the outside world, but in the museum setting it has long been thought of as a subject of minority interest. This has resulted in a lack of policy about the care of collections, exacerbated by a lack of data on the nature and distribution of musical material.

Historically, most of our major collections are based upon antique instruments amassed '...not from a single tradition but out of several separate ideologies about the purpose of collecting'.[19] This has meant that these museums' focus has been overwhelmingly object-based, a practice which continues in our present collections. However, although the collections often *have* to be object centred,

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[19]*Museums of Music*,p.3.

this should not be used as an excuse for their interpretation to be restricted to concrete concerns. Too often 'music collection' is taken to be synonymous with *instrumental* collection, when in fact it should properly be re-defined to include other types of collection illustrating a musical subject. The *Museums of Music* 'Review' has examined this matter, and encouragingly has adopted a wider definition of 'music collection' to include musical instruments, musical manuscripts, sound archives and Birthplace museums; (although these categories are touched-upon only briefly, and are clearly viewed as being subservient to their instrumental equivalents).[20] The cross-section of museums visited herein is representative of this increased spectrum of music collections, each illustrative of the choice of interpretation music can offer.

Music as a Museological Subject

Firstly, in order to understand the aims of the museums discussed, it is necessary to examine the ways in which a music collection may be presented, and to note which of these approaches has been the most successful. We have already seen that the concept of music as a subject for display is too vast to be comprehensive, and that museums cope with this by restricting their collections to a specific criterion or theme. In this way, the Victoria and Albert Museum is concerned with instruments as decorative art, while the British Museum collects only instruments of antiquity; other collections are finite: 'the Dolmetsch Collection' at the Ranger's House and the military band collection at Gloucester Folk Museum are examples of this category.

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[20]See *Museums of Music* for their definition of a 'music collection'. It has recognised that musical collections need not be instrumental ones and that they should '...also consider collections of non-instrumental material provided it forms the main focus of the collection.', p.13.

The aims of a collection will always be an extension of the policies of the different museum types: national, provincial, university, Music Schools, independent and private museums. Examples of all these types were visited. It is not generally appreciated that music collections may be found in so many categories of museum, and on so many different scales. Within these museums, the musical material may range from items of national importance to singular curios, a scenario which may in part explain why until recently there has been no attempt to make a systematic list of these musical holdings.[21] Although an interest in music is regarded as being fairly universal (and music is present in all of the above museum categories), music is notoriously obscure as a museum subject and is often perceived as a 'specialist' area. Music collections are frequently difficult to find, and the general public are largely unaware of their existence. If questioned about music collections or museums in the United Kingdom most people would only be able to guess at naming one or two possibilities: 'Are there any?' is the usual reply received when I have asked would-be visitors to name such a collection, although in fairness, this is not really the fault of the museums in question. Musically active people will often know about specific music collections; the problem regarding a more *general* awareness arises because of the large proportion of our musical collections which are 'hidden' within wider confines, or classed in categories other than 'music'. Naturally, the attention paid to a music collection in these circumstances may be more sporadic than it would be in a purely musical museum, for the collection will be viewed in a different way; and in an eclectic museum there is no reason why music should be given priority. It is therefore problematic to compare approaches taken towards music collections in museums because their aims and function will vary according to the wishes of each institution. When the collecting policies are not totally geared towards music, then

[21]This was recommended in *Museums of Music.*

the use of the collection changes accordingly. Here, a division into 'Music Only' and 'Hidden Collection' may be useful in defining the case-study museums:[22]

Music Only	**Hidden Collections**
Balnain House	Victoria and Albert Museum
Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum	The British Museum
Horniman Museum[23]	British Library - Mozart Exhibition
The Ranger's House ('the Dolmetsch Collection')	Truro Museum - Mozart Exhibition
Rock Circus	Gloucester Folk Museum
Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments	
Magnificent Music Machines	
The National Sound Archive	

At least half of the music collections in the United Kingdom are of the 'hidden' type, and even within this category, they may vary in degrees of elusiveness: the music collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum is substantial and well established within the museum world; the local history collection in Gloucester Folk Museum is small, without any special attention being paid to it; and the two Mozart exhibitions (in Truro Museum and the British Library) were temporary. These circumstances suggest that museums need to work hard at promoting themselves. Many excellent musical collections are unknown to the wider public from basic ignorance of their existence rather than a general apathy. This situation may be further exacerbated if the museum's location is geographically remote (The

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[22]The classification 'Hidden Collection' is my own. It is used to include all museums (or equivalent) where musical material is a department or minor collection rather than the *subject* of the museum; and where the exhibition is not a permanent one.
[23]*The Horniman Museum* is also a museum of ethnographic and plant collections but the 'Music Department' is so extensive that it is more appropriately placed in the 'Music' list.

Magnificent Music Machines); the collection inaccessible (Gloucester Folk Museum's musical holdings are usually in store due to lack of display space);[24] or the collection is generally not publicised because it is part of a wider concern. In this last case, for example the Bowes Museum, Durham, has a collection of decorative art worthy of becoming a 'Collection of National Significance';[25] included in which are about eighty (predominantly keyboard) instruments dispersed - in reality 'hidden' - throughout the museum in a series of period room settings. The most important hidden collection of all is in the British Museum, with several thousand musical instruments dispersed throughout its departments. Their function is to work with the other collections to form a cohesive display illustrating various civilisations or eras, unless drawn-out for special attention. It is hoped that the drawing-up of systematic lists of musical material held in this country, as suggested in *Museums of Music*, will unearth and promote these hidden collections.

In general, the larger national museums have the power, money and historical prestige to collect the items of the greatest financial, historical or decorative value, whereas the independent and provincial museums tend to have more individual collections, used to illustrate private enthusiasts' holdings or local social history. Both policies of acquisition are of value, the benefit of such variety being that the collections have an *increased potential* for the creative use of material, depending

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[24]Birthplace Museums also tend to suffer from this, being houses rather than purpose-built museums. As such, visitor numbers and access are a common problem. Both the Gustav Holst and Edward Elgar Birthplace Museums are comparatively small by museum standards (a town house and a Victorian cottage respectively). The Elgar Museum can accommodate only twenty visitors at a time, the Holst Museum about thirty. Proposals to build an 'Elgar Museum and Library' adjacent to the existing Birthplace Museum have been opposed by the Elgar family in the belief that it will spoil the atmosphere of the original cottage. Instead, they are championing the planned 'Elgar Centre for English Music' in nearby Malvern, which will include a museum-style presentation of associated material. (See *The Museums Journal* , October 1994, p.12.)

[25]As suggested in *The Museums Association's Report 1994.*

upon the interpretation the museum wishes to convey. There appear to be five main categories through which a collection may be classified and presented: [26]

Craft/Performance: Balnain House, The Ranger's House, The Magnificent Music Machines.

Academic: The British Museum, (The British Library), The National Sound Archive, The University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

Social History: The British Library 'Mozart Exhibition', Gloucester Folk Museum, The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum, Truro Museum 'Mozart Exhibition'.

Music History: The Horniman Museum, Rock Circus, The University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

Decorative Art: The Victoria and Albert Museum, (The Ranger's House).

None of these categories is mutually exclusive; most of the music collections will find themselves wearing different labels from time to time, although here the advantage of categorising is that it encourages the visitor to view the musical material and accompanying information in a specific way; it helps to *structure thought* about what they are going to see. When the Victoria and Albert Museum describes an instrument in terms of furniture and design, it shapes the way the visitor thinks about it into becoming an item of 'craftsmanship', and in the Holst Birthplace Museum, wherein a label can be found telling the story of how Holst came to buy his piano, the visitor's interest is directed deliberately towards the composer's personal history rather than the piano itself, as befits a more personal interpretation of the material.

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[26]Whereas the *Museums of Music Review* tends to analyse by types of institution, I prefer to examine by the *way* in which a museum defines its collection. Although one is a reflection of the other, I believe that a stylistic approach is the more revealing when looking at the collection from the perspective of the visitor.

The size and category of a music collection is also reflected in its methods of documentation and subsequent research. In the past the level of documentation of a musical collection has been at the discretion of the individual museums concerned. This has led to a rather piecemeal understanding of the subject in museums that do not have access to specialist music curators or information; and even within the larger collections there is sometimes a lack of cohesion with a subject that may be approached in so many different ways. Disagreements over the best classification system to use (a system that is ideal for one museum may not suit another) still occur, though it is generally acceptable to use the standards set down by CIMCIM. However this is not compulsory, and so at present there is still not a nationally accepted standard for documentation. The neglect of this area is especially noticeable in the field of ancient and ethnographic instruments, where classifications are generally less well-defined than for their Western counterparts, and there is likely to be even less literary resource information.

Musical Collections interpreted as Social History

Of all the approaches taken towards the display of the collections, the most creative and rewarding were those which attempted to place the collection within a wider context through the inclusion of aspects of its social history. The use of social-historical material creates another dimension on the subject, one which the general visitor is more likely to be able to identify with, having less emphasis upon musicological knowledge than does the more usual academic approach. In the case of the Magnificent Music Machines, the visitor learns about the social standing of mechanical music since c.1900 as well as the practicalities of how these instruments worked and the types of music they played. Any functional items - especially musical instruments - are a product of people and of their history, and yet, by contrast, the Victoria and Albert Museum divorces its musical collection from much of this information by cataloguing its collection as 'Furniture

and Decorative Art'. Although all design and decoration is a result of changing taste and attitudes in society, this vital social element is quite lacking from their display and unfortunately weakens it.[27]

Aside from the cross-section of museums discussed in detail here, many of the other museums from the original list were questioned about how they viewed the 'category' of their collection. In answer, over half cited the category of 'social history', followed by (in descending order) 'local history', 'decorative art' and finally, as purely 'musical instrument collection'.[28] The Gloucester Folk Museum is a good example of a locally-based museum that interprets its collections within a social and local history context; like most local museums with musical material its contents are of note because of local associations rather than intrinsic worth. Visitors to local history museums tend to be general-interest visitors (or interested locals) rather than specialists, and so in consequence, music collections will usually be considered from the historical-social perspective which is more suited to them. Such collections are frequently of indeterminable quality and so it is rare for them to be catalogued as 'art objects' as they would be in the Victoria and Albert Museum: the criterion changes depending on the viewpoint, resulting in an unsystematic and individualistic approach towards the subject in many smaller museums.

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[27]The museum is systematic in that all of its collections are interpreted within the boundaries of applied art and design. However, as its 'Musical Instrument Collection' is also the designated 'National Collection of Musical Instruments' and many of the instruments have unique and fascinating histories, a greater proportion of social-historical information is justifiable.

[28]This was done in order to establish an over-view of how the museums described themselves and therefore interpreted their collections. See Appendix A for list of museums contacted.

The Local History Museum

Gloucester Folk Museum's music collection has always been peripheral within the overall museum because it is small and unexceptional; nor has there ever been a specialist curator of musical instruments resident; and naturally, the limited staff numbers and financial resources of the museum have to be channelled into the primary collections. This is a common scenario affecting small music collections. In an eclectic museum such as this, there is no reason why music should be given priority over any of the other collections, and as a general rule, few of these museums seek to purchase musical material as a matter of course, and will buy or accept donations only if they have strong local connections. If, however, the musical collection is *not* of any great local significance, it then tends to be neglected, having less application in the museum context. Frequently, local museums will have had to adopt a 'rotating' display policy, (inevitably due to lack of space): in this way many music collections find themselves in permanent store or on temporary display and special exhibitions only. This was the case at Gloucester Folk Museum, whose military instrument collection belonging to the 'Frampton Volunteers' was held in permanent store, unless required for exhibitions featuring other military memorabilia.

A typical local museum 'Acquisition Policy' as found in the Gloucester Folk Museum may be summarised thus:

Current Collection:

1. Objects must reflect music-making in the area to present day if possible.
2. Other ephemera (concert programmes, scores etc.) should be collected where relevant because of the great advantages for contextual display.

Future Collecting Objectives:

1. To acquire instruments associated with local makers or societies.
2. That 'music' should be made to include all aspects of music-making in the area, not just instruments alone.
3. Associated material should be collected.
4. To make sound tape recordings where applicable (e.g. local bands, local dances and musical activities.

The last of these objectives, 'to make sound recordings' may be ambitious and expensive, yet it shows that this local authority is looking towards the future, and by this method is adding a further source of social history reference: this is an area in which the more specialist music museums should also be thinking of expanding. The great advantage of local history museums is that they regard music as being part of the overall fabric of life, rather than divorcing it from everyday life and society in order to become *specialist;* and the line between becoming *specialist* and becoming *elitist* is, unfortunately, very narrow.

The Advantages of a Social-Historical Approach

Many curators in small local authority museums find that by confining a musical collection to a social history category, this actually gives them much more scope for development in display terms than would the more typical academic-museological approach:

> I strongly believe that there is every advantage in presenting music related themes in a social history/local history context in the very widest sense. Music is so much a social, cultural expression that to try to separate it from these links is to remove it from the very reason for its existence. To

> listen to music and deny the cultural background for its composition, its intended audience and the personalities of the musicians is surely to lose the whole point of the music itself. There are of course difficulties in trying to capture the wide range of interpretations and influences in a display, but at least be aware of the possibilities.[29]

The strength of this attitude in treating musical collections is in its subjectivity: this has to be one of the aims of the social-historical approach. Some collections - certainly Birthplace Museums - lend themselves to this method. For example, children's musical toys can be classified as musical instruments but are of greater interest if placed in their cultural context of toys in the form of musical instruments. A small display in the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood touches on this, as do certain exhibits in the Horniman Museum. This approach has immediate appeal, by creating an empathy with the visitors of a different sort from the cerebral overtones of the 'academic' display. Frequently, this treatment rests with the view of an individual curator whose knowledge is spread over all the museum holdings, rather than a team of musical specialists; and this may lead to a sense of cohesion among the other social historical collections through the borrowing and overlapping of material to enhance the displays.

The Restrictions of Instrument Collections

Most commonly, music collections consist of instruments; but even within this category curators may have quite different interpretations of the collection:

> A musical instrument in a [display] case is reduced to being an object of design interest or interesting for its manufacture. It can take on all the trappings and iconography of its owner; i.e. Elvis Presley's guitar. It can

[29]Letter from Stephen Done, Curator of *Cyfathra Museum,* Merthyr Tydfil, (25.10.91).

> also stand as an embodiment of visual art and for an exploration of the kind of music played, and to whom and why and when....[30]

The first part of this comment is overly decisive; museums, for reasons of security and conservation, have no choice but to house their treasures in protective surroundings, and surely an instrument, (even one in a display case), is still capable of being interpreted in a number of ways? All instruments are 'mute' until they are interpreted; and this might be through an analysis of design, manufacture, social history, sound, or any combination of these factors. However, many museums still regard music as a difficult and specialist subject, and it is here that the smaller and 'hidden' collections are most intimidated:

> Generally speaking, I think musical instruments are difficult to interpret in a museum. To my surprise I frequently find that serious musicians have little interest in instruments *per se* - their interest is in music; and for the public at large a case of static musical instruments is of little interest. I think however, that concentrating on one particular theme such as their local manufacture should widen interest in the subject.[31]

Such difficulties with musical collections has prompted the question of whether these museums should be changing and reviewing their current display policies, to find better methods for the clarification of their collections. To some extent the smaller 'one-off' displays and special exhibitions (the 'Mozart exhibitions' in Truro Museum and The British Library) for example, have already been doing this through the inventive use of their musical material to achieve more dynamic ends. It was perhaps easier for them to do this because, in comparison with the majority of musical collections, their displays were mostly non-instrumental, temporary,

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[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Letter from David Eveleigh, Curator of Social History *Blaise Castle Museum,* Bristol, (17.12.91).

and marketed with a greater emphasis on attracting the general public rather than the musical enthusiast or specialist. The less adventurous displays are unfortunately usually the academic or historical ones, where it has been necessary to establish an objective, systematic and scholarly approach to the musical genre. The academic collections are also held in well established institutions - the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the University of Edinburgh Collection - an active demonstration that the 'category' within which are concealed the aims of the museum, will define the whole interpretation of the collection. It is an interesting exercise to examine what the academic museum chooses to tell us about its collections and what it omits: the reason why it 'leaves out' something is often revealing of the restrictions within which these museums have to work. To discuss this, there follows a 'case-study' of how the flute is presented at the University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments,[32] with suggestions for augmenting the information available to answer the typical questions that a student of music might ask of an academic display.

Academic Museums : The Flute

The flutes are displayed in wall-mounted cabinets as a single chronological family group next to the related recorder section. Each flute is given a detailed technical description, but there are no master labels which would have been beneficial in introducing the subject. A basic statement regarding the acoustical properties of the flute is also needed in order to understand how it works - a simple comment about tuning being dependent upon the design of the bore, and how air vibrations travelling down various lengths of the tube (controllable by the finger holes) produces the sound, would suffice to explain its design. It should be remembered that people are usually intrigued by why an instrument looks as it does and how this may affect the sound; without explanation the instrument by itself often gives

[32]This is based on a visit made in 1992.

little indication of the sort of sound it produces. It is at this point that audio and visual facilities are of invaluable help: when the instrument is *played* it is easier to see and understand how it works. If, however, this facility is not available, then it becomes vital not to neglect the practical side of the instrument in favour only of its design and history. On design, the labels state what the instrument is made of, but it would be a bonus to explain the evolution of materials used to make the flute, from wood to metal or both, and the reasons for this. Similarly, the number and layout of key-pads is given but not the reason for their addition and increasing complexity. Such elucidation need not be overly complex: simply stating that in flutes the denser the material the stronger the sound and that metal has advantages for mass production in manufacture, is sufficient to give a reason for the evolution in design, and would compliment the straightforward description of the instrument. These factors are rarely pointed out in academic museums, and yet such facts would interest the layman as well as the musician.

The Benefits of Relating Instruments to their Wider Context

In instrumental collections of this kind, it is of great historical value to relate the instruments to the composers who wrote for them and the type of music they would have played. Psychologically, where general interest visitors are concerned, it is advantageous to be able to associate instruments with composers of which they may have heard: it is the difference between labelling a flute as being 'Late eighteenth-century German' and 'Late eighteenth-century German flute, of the type used by Mozart in his later symphonies'. The sense of familiarity with a composer's name provides a point of reference so that the labels can clarify, for example, that the flute (recorder) used by J.S.Bach sounds different from the instrument used by Beethoven, or the 'modern' instrument used by Stravinsky - the evolution in design encouraged by the increasing demands for flexibility and volume needed by the composers. Thus, it would be beneficial to describe why

the flute had to change as well as *how*. One way in which to demonstrate these changes is, of course, to hear the instrument being played so that direct comparisons may be made. Unfortunately, this is usually not a viable proposition, and so where no audio facilities exist, it is again of paramount importance to include some written or verbal information on their *practical use*. As an example of academic-historical labelling in the University of Edinburgh Collection, a typical account of an instrument appears thus:

> (1546) Flute; Kulow, early C20th. Ten keys, three rings. L713. Compass to B. Blackwood, conical bore; German silver, head joint and keys; ebonite embouchure plate. Keys for B, C, C sharp, D sharp, cross F, long F, three trill keys for IV and B, B flat key in alternative touch piece for IV, vent key for G attached to ring for IV, G sharp and C keys operated by rings on I and II. Inscribed 'Werk Kapelle ...O. Dutting Nordhorn with lyre and 'Kulow Magdemburg 79. Two protective caps for tenons in fitted case with piccolos (1547) and (1548).
> (Mickleburgh Collection)[33]

This is a highly detailed and scholarly account in keeping with the academic aims of the museum, yet it is also an example of how a category, (in this case that of the academic), may disadvantage the collection by only telling one part of a much more varied story. It is arguable that a music museum may not be all things to all people; by attempting to cover every facet of the flute (design, social history, decoration etc.) the result may be an unwieldy and confusing volume of material being exhibited and described. Labelling has to be selective, and, more importantly, be of an amount and quality that visitors will take the trouble to read. No matter how erudite a commentary may be, even the musically keen visitor may be deterred if it appears overly profuse. Above all, what should be avoided for an

[33]Label item 1546, University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

'academic' museum trying to encourage a wider public, is a catalogue-on-the-wall approach. This is more than compensated for by catalogues of a collection which, by their nature, are acutely academic in the amount of detail and comprehensiveness of information they provide. Nevertheless, because they are aimed at curators and musical specialists rather than the general visitor, it is not enough to simply reproduce this information for the display case where the criteria are quite different - however easy or tempting this might appear to be. Further to this, there is a tendency to look upon catalogues as definitive accomplishments, whereas they are, in fact, subjective to a large extent (shaped by both the individual museums and curator's view of the collection), and should therefore be up-dated regularly as new material or re-interpretation is introduced. For this, it is necessary to go back to basics by trying to see the object as a visitor might rather than with the familiar eyes of the knowledgeable curator who, quite literally, knows the instrument inside out. Nor is it now adequate to restrict the catalogue to technical and historical details; the *musicality* of the instrument - what did it sound like, when and what did it play - is also vital information.

Theoretically, it should be feasible to retain the technically detailed descriptions of instruments while also introducing master labels outlining the social history of the instrument as a backdrop to the factual information. Many instrumental guidebooks already do this in a concise manner which could be emulated by music museums in the actual display:

> The popular desire to listen to music grew with changes in society in the late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century. Over much of Europe, concerts had usually been given before small audiences in the salons of the aristocracy. Public concerts whose costs must be covered by those who came to hear them, demand large concert halls, and then

> musicians have to make more sound to be heard. Thus orchestras grew larger and instruments grew louder.[34]

It is indicative of the changing climate in many music museums that the University of Edinburgh Collection intends to include more social-historical information (linking the instruments with names of composers and so forth) in the future. The inclusion of supplementary social material is a conscious move to make the collections more appealing to visitors outside of the usual museological sphere, and to be more aware of the movements in modern museum practice. Few museums now rely solely upon endless subject catalogues of display cases without dividing them up into themes or special 'mini' exhibitions in order to make them accessible to the general visitor. The 'type' of visitor a museum attracts is directly influenced by the way it presents its collection and the objectives of that collection in its display,[35] so that inversely, in order to encourage a wider or different audience, the 'category' in which a museum places itself may have to change or be adapted. At the Edinburgh University Collection in the future, a new emphasis on the inclusion of social history should hopefully complement its established scholarly tradition, whilst taking care that it does not *detract* from it in any way. Curators sometimes feel there is a danger in that if the 'interest' of a collection is moved elsewhere or the focus widened, this will erode the comprehensive approach taken towards the *original* category. There are few museums such as the Edinburgh University Collection where the technical information and design of instruments is available in such precise detail,[36] but this is still a highly specialist interest, and if the museum wishes to widen its public support it must change the look and labelling of its displays. Fortunately, the collection has the potential to cope with this change, and in doing so to interest a far greater spectrum of visitors

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[34]Jeremy Montagu, *The Flute* (Shire Publications, Great Britain,1990), p.17.
[35]This idea is discussed more fully in Chapter 2.
[36]For example, it is typical that on my first visit to the collection, the only other visitor was an instrument-maker.

than it does at present. It is unlikely that with its strong educational roots it could ever become a musical theme park rather than the systematic collection that it is.

The Re-interpretation of the University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

Nowhere is the evolution in museological objectives as apparent as in the anticipated changes at the University of Edinburgh Collection. The museum plans to combine its collection with the associated Russell Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments and to house and re-display these amalgamated collections in new premises, designed with the concerns of storage, conservation and display in mind.[37] The promise of increased museum space and facilities has prompted a fresh approach to the subject being taken, which will show musical materials, tools, pictures, documents and ephemera alongside the instrumental collections. Indeed, the whole ethos of the museum will be different: this is demonstrated in the changes found between its existing *Collections Management Policy on Interpretation* and the 'Functions of the Collection' in the *Brief to the Architect and Museum Designer* for the new museum. The former intended to:

> ...promote the study of the history, construction and function of instruments of music and all cognate matters, for the furtherance of research and the propagation of knowledge of instrumental history.[38]

while the latter shows a distinct change of emphasis:

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[37]This new exhibition area will run between St. Cecelia's Hall, Edinburgh (the current home of the Russell Keyboard Collection) and the basement of an adjoining hotel.

[38]*Edinburgh University Collection of Historical Musical Instruments Collections Management Policy* (1992).

4. The purpose of the collection is, through the conservation of musical instruments to promote the knowledge and *performance* of music. This purpose is expressed in the following functions:-

4.1 The *lively* presentation of the Collection as a musical museum.

4.2 The use of the Collection for research.

4.3 The use of certain items from the Collection *in performance*.

4.4 The use of the Collection in University teaching.

4.5 The mounting of *temporary exhibitions*.

4.6 The publication of catalogues, historical material, drawings etc..

4.7 Receiving party visits from schools, societies etc..

4.8 Facilitating the study of items in the Collection by instrument makers.[39]

Previously, history and technology were of primary concern to the museum, within a display policy attempting to show as large a proportion of the substantial collection as possible.[40] At present this amounts to over half of the collection on permanent display, shown in groups of like instruments and within this, chronologically. This policy, despite the confines of cramped display and storage areas, is reflective of the museum's concern to serve in-house students of the University Music Faculty and period instrument-makers. In comparison, the new premises aim at a wider audience and interpretation on *many* musical levels. The overall design is less academic and taxonomic in tone: clearly, it is better to display fewer things but display them well.

At present, the display is stagnating because of lack of space and facilities; it cannot continue to collect as an on-going concern in its present circumstances. The architect's *Brief* is thus to provide a display area for the permanent collection

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[39]*1989 Brief to the Architect and Museum Designer for the New Premises in St. Cecelia's Hall Extension.* The italics are my own.
[40]About 2,400 instruments.

and further space for temporary exhibitions. The present display area at the Reid Concert Hall shows about one thousand instruments in forty-four showcases; and the effect is so overpowering that it is difficult to appreciate the quality of the instruments on show. It is '...too crowded for a museum reaching the general public.'[41] Increased space will facilitate a rotating display of eight or more thematic tableaux, some exploring areas of museum history through contextual display [e.g. 'The Orchestra of the Classical Period'] and others of homogenous display [e.g. 'The Development of the Flute']. The history tableaux will be able to include documents, graphics and non-instrumental material and should provide a welcome change of colour and interest to the displays. The tableaux system also has the advantage of adaptability, with one or two changes in the display each year being made and the possibility of adding new acquisitions. The inclusion of keyboard instruments should also provide visual interest by balancing the cases of groups of smaller instruments.

> The display must please, inform and attract good will.[42]

The new premises are designed to be visitor friendly; much fore-thought has been put into the general ambience of the layout and presentation. The draft plans show a rectangular-shaped main gallery with well spaced cases and, instead of the usual flat and wall mounted cases, items from the collection hung both vertically on surfaces and angled to show two or more sides of an instrument of interesting design. The choice of what is displayed is selective and contextual, using accompanying text and background graphics of musicians playing the instrument being displayed.

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[41] *1989 Architect's Draft Brief,* point 8.2.1.
[42] *Ibid.*, point 8.2.3.

A major development will be the introduction of audio-visual material in order to '...communicate effectively with the museum-going public'.[43] The audio facilities will take the form of a number of sound points: for example, there will be an oscilloscope linked to a trumpet display allowing the visitor to press down the trumpet valves (via a computer) and to see the resulting differences in the sine waves. The aim is to relate sound to instrumental technology in an enjoyable way. Students of acoustics may find this simplistic - the visitor focus has been altered dramatically from the academic -teaching style of the Reid Concert Hall display - but academic lessons in acoustics will continue in as much depth as before, though behind the scenes. In this way, it is possible for academic collections to display and interpret simultaneously on different levels of understanding. The prospect of purpose-built accommodation has acted as a catalyst to prompt a re-evaluation of the collection and its function. It shows that the typecasting of museums and their objectives is quite capable of diversification.

Collecting Policies

It has been shown that there are a considerable number of classifications that may be given to music collections, and that music museums - depending upon their policies - view their collections in vastly differing ways. This being so, it is also valid to consider how the visitors themselves view museum music collections: it will be found that there are many misconceptions. Most people equate *music* primarily with sound, and music in the 'museum environment' as being represented only by musical instruments, omitting a wealth of associated material, scores and manuscripts. Similarly with the term *museum*, it is a commonly held belief that museums only collect 'old things', and if in essence this is true, then placing music and museum together in a title results, for many people, in it

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[43] *Ibid.*, point 8.2.

becoming a 'collection of old musical instruments', a statement which hardly does justice to the material available.

The majority of music collections in the United Kingdom do have a strong historical bias, and so it is important to convey to an audience that, in general, these items were not collected initially simply because they were 'old', but rather because of their rarity value or social worth, and thus form part of a continuing chronology with contemporary instruments and music making. All items, with the passing of time become historical, yet it is unusual to find music museums collecting for the future: most collections consist of items that have 'value' because they are singular and no longer produced. A collecting policy shapes the nature of the collection and therefore what it is capable of: some collections are finite (the Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum, the exhibitions on the life of Mozart in Truro Museum and the British Library), while others either *should be*, or are, continuing to collect (respectively the Victoria and Albert Museum and the University of Edinburgh Collection). It is understood that in the current economic climate all museums are restricted by financial boundaries and cannot collect what they might ideally like to, but it is also realised that it is a false economy to wait until a new design of instrument is a hundred years old before acquiring it.

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL PUBLIC, LAYMAN OR SPECIALIST: WHOM DO MUSIC MUSEUMS SEEK TO ATTRACT?

It would be a difficult task to find someone who is completely uninterested in music; indeed it is probably true to say that music in all its myriad forms is one of the most prominent and unifying of interests that people possess. By this reasoning, museums with musical collections should be places of pilgrimage for the millions of people for whom music is an important part of life. However this is rarely the case in practice.

State-funded museums are legally obliged to exist for the 'Public Benefit' and be *intellectually* accessible to all. The 1994 'National Strategy for Museums' states that 'Museums should try to accommodate the different learning capabilities and knowledge of all sectors of society'.[44] Museums, in general, *are* attempting to make their collections accessible to all members of the general public, however because of the intrinsic problems inherent in music as a display subject, it is rarely displayed to its full potential, tending instead to polarise into the 'academic' or populist approaches personified by collections such as the University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments and Rock Circus. Museums are trying to present a subject to individuals who each have a *unique response* to it, (although this may be influenced in terms of musical sophistication by age, education, innate musicality and personal taste). In marketing terms, 'music' covers a diversity of user groups, with the style of interpretation dependent upon the type of music and perceived 'type' of visitor. Thus Edinburgh University's classical music collection produces an academic and

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[44]*The Museums Association Museum Collections of National Significance: Annual Report*,(1993-4), p.14.

serious approach, while Rock Circus's pop music collection is aimed at an obviously younger and less serious end of the musical market. In the latter's case, popular museums have their place as long as their criteria is not based upon the number of visitors rather than the *quality* of the displays; an appraisal which ought to be true of any musical collection. Independent museums, which are financially dependent upon visitors, are more likely to enter the popular music business and tend to be the more adventurous - and commercial - in their displays. It is possible that the 'classical' collections might try to emulate some of the successful techniques used in such populist collections, if not perhaps the financial sensibilities behind it. For the majority of music museums it is now a question of how they can better serve a classically interested (though often intimidated) general public, without alienating their hard-core of existing visitors. This chapter attempts to look at what the museums visited did in order to attract their visitors and also examines the ways in which different types of musical collection bring in a specific audience.

Visitors' Attitude towards Music

People's taste in music is as diverse as the almost infinite number of sounds, styles and cultures from which music emanates. It would be an impossibility for a museum to attempt to cater for all interests; most music collections are specific, concerned with a well-defined category of musical presentation and the aims of the individual museum, as outlined in the previous chapter. There are, nevertheless, certain dominant areas of interest catered for by our museums which colour the way that most visitors would view 'music in museums' in the United Kingdom. In theory, there is scope for a musical collection to appeal to all people; potentially the music collection may draw in '...the organologist and musician, people who are artists, designers or craftsmen, ethnologists and anthropologists, those interested in church, military or local history, social historians and members of the

general public.'[45] However, in spite of this, music as a museum subject still caries an elitist tag, one that is probably exacerbated by the fact that many of these collections are historically based, with all of the pre-conceived 'dry-as-dust' imagery which has grown-up around old fashioned collections in museums. It is also the case that people experience music in the first instance *aurally* and so naturally equate music with sound rather than through its physical representation in the form of instruments and scores. It is understandable that the non-specialist visitor may feel intimidated by the object-based approach which these museum collections, by their very nature, have to take. It would seem that music as a museum topic is in an insidious position from the visitors' perspective; for to take the antithesis of the object-based collection - a visit to the National Sound Archive, this would provide all the *sound* of music without the *substance,* and would probably be an equally unsatisfactory prospect for the non-specialist. This is borne out by the fact that although it welcomes visitors, the National Sound Archive is still essentially an academic social-historical repository for sound; its function precludes any attempts to turn it into a visitor 'attraction'.[46]

Perceptions of 'Popular' and 'Specialist' Exhibitions

The approachability of music material in museums is usually dependent upon the nature of the collection. Here, specialist interests aside, human nature plays its part with the visitors concerned: people are unsure of things which are unfamiliar or new to them but respond more confidently towards things that they have experienced before; and in music's case, this means music that they have heard, or played, or studied in some way. This explains, for instance, the recent revival

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[45]Clifford Bevan *Musical Instrument Collections in the British Isles,*(Winchester,1990), p.14. Any discussion of the 'expert' and 'general ' visitor is of course subjective, but I believe that for the purpose of this work it is useful to have a 'general public' category whilst noting that even within this musical interest can vary, as do the individuals themselves.

[46]This may be usefully contrasted with Rock Circus. Both institutions use sound recordings as the raw material for their collections but to quite different ends.

of interest in opera, spurred on by the almost cultist proportions of the 'Three Tenors' and the way in which certain pieces of classical music have become well-known through their use in advertisements.[47] This desire to latch on to the known and secure was apparent in the museums visited; by far the most popular collections were the Truro Museum and British Library exhibitions concerned with the life of Mozart, a personality already established as a favourite and accessible composer, whose bi-centenary celebrations had been understandably capitalised upon by musical and non-musical concerns alike throughout 1991. Both exhibitions were highly educational in tone, but with any labelling of 'intellectualism' or 'elitism' (all too common when dealing with a *classical* composer) off-set by the knowledge that Mozart's music is phenomenally popular with a broad spectrum of people, and, as one of the few great 'named' composers of whom everyone has heard (and importantly have frequently heard his music as well), is an acceptable and approachable subject, inspiring not indifference out of ignorance but veritable hero-worship. These exhibitions were a success because they appeared from the outset to be accessible. 1991 was also the anniversary of Sergei Prokofiev's birth, yet there were no museum exhibitions celebrating this in the United Kingdom; and it is clear that even if there had been, they could not have hoped to attain the same kudos and mass-appeal of a Mozartian exhibition, for the reasons given above.

In recent years, the increasing number of museum collections devoted to mechanical music is also due in part to their non-classical (and thus by extension, in the minds of much of the general public non-intellectual) status, concerned instead with popular entertainment rather than erudition. Most of these museums have scholarly programmes of research and conservation just as the more classical-historical museums do, but because their collections are connected with family

[47]The ideology behind the marketing of classical music is discussed in the Introduction.

entertainment, (often with instruments from only the last sixty years or so), the visitor is given the reassurance of *familiarity*. Mechanical music collections such as the Magnificent Music Machines (the Paul Corin Musical Collection, Liskeard, Cornwall) also invariably demonstrate their instruments, a feature unavailable in most academic museum collections for obvious reasons. The 'active' element in mechanical museums is their trump card and one of the fundamental reasons for their popularity as museums of music.[48] To the visitor, these museums appear to be less serious, without the 'restraints' of historical respect and connoisseurship found where academic collections are concerned. Such museums are regarded as places of entertainment rather than education, and so the general visitor's attitude towards mechanical music without, as yet, any tags of real antiquity and prestige, is a less deferential one.

Do Music Museums have a Specific Audience in Mind?

Generally, music museums are reluctant to admit that their collections might be targeted towards attracting any particular type of visitor. When questioned about this, most of the museums claimed that they tried to cater for everyone; it was only if pressed on this point that they would admit that some types of visitors prevailed more than others. [49] Of the academic and historical museums, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum, as national institutions, had the widest spectrum of visitor types, ranging from the specialist to the casual passer-by, while the smaller collections such as the Ranger's House ('the Dolmetsch Collection') and the University of Edinburgh Collection tended to cater for musicians rather than the general public. Geographical location and

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[48]See Chapter 4 for a discussion on the ethics of restoring and playing musical instruments.

[49]One of the questions asked in the music museum questionnaire was concerned with museums attempting to attract any particular 'type' of visitor, and if this was *not* the case, then did any specific group of people tend to predominate anyway? In the majority of the replies the museums claimed a cross-section of visitors but within this did single-out the categories of *general public* and *specialist* as definite 'types'.

accessibility play a role in this: when the museum is not in a prime site, it is reasonable to assume that most of its visitors have made their visit there deliberately. However, it is one thing to 'come inside out of the rain' in London at the British Museum, but quite another to 'drop into' the Magnificent Music Machines, tucked away in the countryside at the end of several miles of Cornish lane.

Are the 'Types ' of Visitor Defined by the Nature of the Museum Itself?

It is obvious that where a visitor has made a specific journey to see a museum collection, then that individual has a purpose in mind (whether specialist or not); and the museum must try to respond to this interest. However, museums often find themselves facing a dilemma: academic museums such as the British Museum with a scholarly approach towards their collections, usually attract musical specialists because of the nature of their collections, while, in turn, these musicologists will go to the British Museum because it holds the type of musical information they require. In the same way, the principal function of Rock Circus and the Magnificent Music Machines is to entertain, therefore most visitors will go there in order to be entertained. Catering for all tastes and levels of interest is, in practice, actually very hard to achieve; although finding a balance between education and entertainment in a musical context need not result in a 'Jack of all Trades' approach. With care, it should still be possible for a musical collection to be accessible on different levels if the material is interpreted in a more visitor-conscious way.

Can Musical Collections Appeal to Everyone?

The question of whether or not music is too academic a language to be equally of interest to the layman as the musician is manifest in the way a collection is displayed. Not everyone would automatically wish to see a display of keyboard instruments (or model trains or kitchen equipment, for example), yet thoughtfully presented, *any* collection should have something of interest in it to catch the attention or the imagination. The prospect of looking at row upon row of glass cases filled with unfamiliar objects does not inspire potential visitors if the subject is not one which immediately appeals to them.[50] By contrast, it is noticeable that the exhibitions that do create or sustain interest are frequently those with an inventive accompanying text. Most items are dumb until a label or text panel tells us something about them: how a museum labels, what it says and how it says it, is frequently a good indication as to the 'type' of visitor it thinks it will attract and at what level of interest. Only rarely now are museum collections found where the exhibits are left to 'speak for themselves'; indeed surveys have shown that in terms of cultural institutions, it is art galleries (notorious for giving only the briefest of textual information), that the general public finds most intimidating.[51] From all the museums visited, only the Magnificent Music Machines provided no labelling or textual information, although this deficit was off-set by a comprehensive guided tour. Nonetheless, labels would have been an asset; they are relatively inexpensive to produce and once in place should only require a minimum of up-dating; they can convey a large amount of information succinctly and are practically maintenance free. As a first step, the use of clear labels and an

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[50]A reaction I have experienced at first hand when accompanied by non-musical friends on museum visits.

[51]As discussed by Nick Merriman, 'Museum Visiting as a Cultural Phenomenon', *The New Musicology*, ed. P. Vergo(London,1989), pp. 149-72.

unpretentious text is psychologically a better way to help the musical layman than is an expensive outlay on special musical talks or one-off concerts.

The Horniman Museum: Attracting Visitors at All Levels of Musical Knowledge.

Where open days and musical workshops *do* work most successfully to encourage both the layman and the musician, they are invariably a cohesive part of a museum's policy of outreach and education which is also mirrored in its general displays. From the museums visited, it was the Horniman Museum that best achieved this combination of musical scholarship and entertainment in attempting to entice the musical layman. This approach may well have been shaped by its prevalence of non-Western musical instruments, which, it is assumed, even classically minded visitors would have a limited knowledge. Western classical music is often regarded with an unwarranted degree of solemnity in museums, a situation given further *gravitas* because the instruments and their history are comparatively so well documented and established; but with ethnomusicology there are fewer preconceptions and therefore perhaps more freedom to explore. The most powerful message that the Horniman Museum succeeds in putting across is that no one sort of music is better than any other; the most simple and crudely made instruments are of as much importance as the complex or antique objects. The museum defines a musical instrument as being 'an item that is used to make sound deliberately', and despite treating its ethnomusicological instruments as a category distinct from its Western collections, the same themes of design, performance and social history still apply. For the musical layman, this is where the display is more profitable than, for example, the British Museum's dispersed and non-thematic approach towards its non-Western instrumental collections.

To justify the last statement, some of the ways in which the Horniman Museum presents its musical collections to attract the various strata of visitor types should be described. Above all, its objective was to be informative without becoming either patronising to the musical layman or superficial for the musician. The museum has a major collection of non-musical ethnographic material which is displayed (as social history) on the ground-floor of the museum, while the musical instruments are housed upstairs; with the occasional exception of a number of choice instruments displayed with the social history material as part of a contextual display. Psychologically, this is a clever device: the majority of visitors will naturally explore the ground-floor exhibits *first* on entering the museum before going upstairs to the music gallery, and in so doing, inadvertently gain some social-historical background knowledge of the various cultures whose instruments are represented. For example, one tableau illustrating 'Cultural Mexico' using the masks worn during festival dances and an armadillo shell guitar played by the dancers during their 'Shell Dance', is included against a backdrop of archive photographs of the actual 'Shell Dance' in progress. Including facets of social history is an excellent method of introducing the musical layman to unfamiliar instruments; after a display like this, he should be more inclined to venture upstairs to view the instruments and will have a context for them in his mind.

The Horniman Museum: Interpretation of the Collection

The Horniman Museum's musical holdings were extensively re-organised for the opening of its new 'Music Gallery' in October 1993. The following account describes how the collection was displayed both prior to and after this date.

On the occasion of my first visit to the Horniman Museum in 1991, I began as many of the other visitors did, by taking advantage of the optional audio 'Walkman' tape guide on offer in order to hear what the instruments would sound

like.[52] The tape began with a preamble on the history of the museum: 'Who was Frederick J. Horniman and why did he collect?' It then went on to describe the cataloguing system used: this is by the *way* in which the instruments produce their sound (idiophone, chordophone, aerophone and membraphone), rather than the more common classification by classical family groups (wind, brass strings percussion). In terms of documentation, the method used has a direct effect upon the attitude taken towards the collection. This system is especially beneficial when dealing with more obscure and non-Western instruments and was chosen because it would '...simplify the definitions used for the general reader with an interest in musical instruments'.[53] The tape then went on to describe the basic layout of the collection - increasingly, museums prepare the visitor *before* he sees the exhibition by including some factual information about the museum, its function and aims. This fore-knowledge is not superficial; it helps to give a greater understanding of why a collection has developed in a particular way or even of how it has come to exist at all.

In the 'Music Gallery', the first case met by the visitor was a display showing the development of keyboard action. This provided a solid introduction to the collection, for of all musical images, the piano keyboard is one of the best known and attractive to both the musician and the layman. The textual information divided its history into four sections: (From c. 1400), the clavichord; the single manual harpsichord; *Christofori's* piano; piano *Erard* (c. 1826). Instead of using what could well have been an excessively technical narrative or diagram, the

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[52]Audio and sound is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

[53]The italics are my own. These definitions are based on those devised by CIMCIM. It is based on the Hornbostel-Sachs system and is intended to clarify any vagueness of terminology; for example the common term *percussion* (meaning 'struck') can cover instruments as dissimilar as the xylophone, drum, piano or bells. (See Jean L. Jenkins, 'Musical Instruments', *The Horniman Museum*, (London, 1977), p. 9.) This system relies upon a physical description of the instrument and is therefore not culturally specific and is easier for the non-specialist curator to apply. It also avoids the hierarchical preference usually given to Western art music classifications. Currently (1994), CIMCIM have implemented pilot projects to improve documentation methods based upon this principle.

display employed a replica of each keyboard in question displayed in cross-section to show its mechanical action. This display device could then, according to the visitor, be interpreted on different levels: for the musical visitor it was a fascinating visual demonstration of mechanical instrumental development, and for the layman it provided a rare opportunity to see just what goes on inside a keyboard instrument. By explaining a complicated technical evolution in this way, the effect is more immediate and understandable than it would be by describing the process in text alone; if it had been, the musical terms used (hammer, damper, escapement and so forth) would perhaps be appreciated only by the musician, indeed the layman may not bother to read the text at all, if it looked so musically complex. Rather than this, the text panels accompanying the visual display gave only the information required to explain the models, and threaded through this a brief general history of the keyboard instrument. Later in the exhibition a similar treatment was given to a display of bagpipes which had been dissected in order to reveal how their chanter and reeds worked. This was shown against a background of their musical history, including how, for example, Handel was inspired by the sound of the Italian bagpipes in some of his works.

The re-display of the Horniman's instrumental collection, aptly named 'The Music Room' opened in October 1993. In contrast to its previous incarnation, it makes extensive use of high-technology audio-visual facilities in an approach that is deliberately tactile and aural, within what is still essentially a 'glass-case' and object-based environment. The multi-media facilities have the advantage of being able to store and retrieve an extensive volume of data, while taking-up only a small amount of space in the actual exhibition area. The gallery is now divided into four sections. The first introduces the collections in an up-dated version of the former 'Walkman' account.

The 'Music Room' is about experiencing the instruments and the music they create.' , [54] and begins by describing the aims and facilities of the museum. As with the earlier guide, headphones play examples of the music performed by the instruments on show.[55] Once the sounds have been established in the ears of the visitors, they may then move on into a 'hands-on' area of sound-producing equipment. This varies from a sophisticated interactive video showing the manufacture, performance and acoustical properties of a French horn,[56] to simple sound-producing experiments using everyday objects such as elastic bands. Further computer touch-screens are placed around the outer walls of the gallery which will call-up information on several hundred of the instruments in the accompanying cases. This surveys ethnographic history, performance and sound. The depth of information is detailed and graded, allowing visitors to control the 'level' of information they receive on the screen. It is also possible to 'skim' through the instrumental catalogues or be exhaustive in your search; and children in particular are attracted to the touch- screen exhibits, being often more computer literate than their elders. Indeed the curators have noted that children will occasionally try to outwit or deliberately confuse the computer, and it is not uncommon for one or two of the screens to be out of order as a result.[57] Museums may have to take a risk when relying on technology, but on balance the curators in this instance, felt that the benefit overall to visitors outweighed the nuisance factor.[58]

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[54] 1994 pamphlet *Music at the Horniman.*

[55] At present, one hundred and fifty instruments have this sound facility, with the intention of up-grading programmes as money becomes available.

[56] This instrument was commissioned by the museum in 1992 for the new exhibition, with the intention that its *production* be recorded on film and shown as part of the display. The interactive video on the horn cost £60,000.

[57] The Horniman Museum is not the only museum to suffer from technological hitches - interactive touch-screen computers have also been out of order at the British Golf Museum on several occasions.

[58] There is, however, still a need to understand how visitors react to such new multi-media devices. It has been suggested the Horniman use· hidden video cameras to watch how visitors behave, to see what are they *really* interested in. (Discussed re. the Horniman Museum, 'Working Group on Exhibition and Education', CIMCIM, Edinburgh, 6.6.94.)

Moving into the central area of the gallery, the visitor finds a further 'hands-on' area where many different types of instrument may be handled and examined. This was obviously one of the most popular areas of the museum for adults and children, musicians and laymen alike. There is no substitute for being able to handle *genuine* articles; even the interactive computer element is designed to complement the existing collections rather than replace them. The display is still object-centred, but the interpretation is one of activity and performance. Sustaining this, the Horniman has an on-going concert series with performances from diverse musical traditions including, naturally, a particular interest in non-Western music through programmes that are '...themed and aim to present unusual but approachable music which does not get performed in the central London concert venues.'[59] The 1994 'Autumn Concert Series' saw 'A Celebration of the Lute and Guitar, including performances on the guitar's 'Arabic cousin' the 'ud.'[60]

Many of the Horniman's outreach activities are targeted specifically at children. Children are the potential visitors (musicologists and laymen alike) of the future and so the museum has a vested interest in striving to catch a younger audience. The museum has an advantage in this in having extensive ethnomusicological collections: non-Western instruments are a source of great curiosity for children, for they are often more colourful and diverse in design than their Western counterparts might appear to be. Colour and texture is also, of course, equally applicable to Western instruments, but from a child's point of view Peruvian panpipes or African percussion instruments are often more exciting because of their exotic unfamiliarity or understandable simplicity.

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[59] 1994 pamphlet *Music at the Horniman.*
[60] *Ibid.*

On entering the museum, there was a table laid out with information sheets about children's workshops; these covered a broad range of traditional and more unusual musical subjects at all musical levels of possible achievement and interest. This included details for a pan-pipe making workshop and a series of lessons for learning to play the recorder at many levels, from its basic techniques to its practical use in consort playing and orchestras. Concerts are frequently held at the museum, with students ranging from eight to eighteen years, and from beginners to those who have taken Grade VIII examinations.[61] In this way the Horniman encourages players at all levels whilst also offering '...an enjoyable and social means of making music together in an historic environment',[62] which would seem to be re-capturing the spirit of amateur music making as it was in the past, to once more become an entertaining and creative social pastime. At a more advanced musical level, the museum also offered classes in 'Composition' and in 'Aural Skills' specifically for students working towards G.C.S.E. or 'A' Levels in music.

The growth in educational outreach in museums over the last ten years in particular, is a subject particularly suited to musical collections because of music's active and practical nature. Most of the larger national museums now have an education department working in conjunction with local schools and interested groups. For example, the Victoria and Albert Museum recently appointed a new head of schools with two museum teachers, and a new educational centre with increased teacher resources was opened in 1993. It is not known how this could affect the music collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum - its criterion is very different from that of the Horniman - although in terms of visitor-awareness it would do well to follow the Horniman's example. Outreach activities do not need to be highly technical; it is often the simplest ideas which are the most effective:

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[61]This refers to the 'Associated Board of the Royal College of Music' examinations of which Grade VIII is the highest.

[62]*Recorder Workshop Information Sheet,* The Horniman Museum(September 1991).

Oxford's Bate Museum produces special 'Bate Guides' for different age groups of children, inspired by the musical instruments on display: 'What materials are used to make this instrument?', 'How many sizes of recorder can you find?' and 'Draw a Bassett Horn.' , are typical questions demonstrating how the scope of the collection may be targeted to suit specific groups and levels of interest.

To some visitors it is curious that music museums often reserve the most interesting and 'fun' methods of interpreting their collection - the chance to handle, play and explore the sound of instruments - only for school visits or special educational parties. The practical side of music making is, therefore, seen as a special event in museum terms rather than the *raison d'être* for the collection. If museums are keen to explore the interactive possibilities of sound with children, then ought not this to be extended as an ideology for the rest of the visiting adult general public? Should an attempt be made to sustain interest across the whole visitor spectrum rather than targeting specific groups?

The Horniman Museum's workshops stress that music is a social act. This creative attitude does much to off-set the 'glass-case' *image* of music museums which may deter visitors, whilst in reality, maintaining these cases as the basis for the display. This is possible because the interpretation of the collection has placed the emphasis upon the *practical* and *sounding* aspects of music, a refreshing change of tone from the more usual academic type of display which concentrates upon history and design. For this reason, in combination with its extensive outreach work, the museum is able to attract the widest band of visitors. Typical of this was a four-day course offered by the museum as a ' Parents and Toddlers Music Group', which was:

> ... an opportunity for two and a half to five year olds with their parents to make and explore music informally with percussion, musical games,

rhymes and action songs. Younger children of participants are welcome to observe.[63]

It is through examples such as this that the seeds of future visits are sown for both children and parents, although it is ironic that this sort of musical workshop will probably make little direct reference to the musical instruments in the collection *as* instruments, but instead, be concerned with some of the fundamentals of *practical* music: rhythm, movement and teamwork. When a museum can offer this as well as 'Aural History' at 'A' Level standard, then it is of equal interest to the layman as the musician.

Collections Limited by Their Material

Of the academic museums visited, the Horniman Museum had the most obviously outgoing approach towards its collections, in taking a *via media* line of interest and interpretation in order to encompass many levels of musical knowledge. This notion is reinforced when the Horniman is contrasted with two polarised museums - the British Museum and the Magnificent Music Machines. Here, the size of the museum collection did not define its success in attracting a cross-section of visitors: the British Museum has the largest collection of musical instruments in the United Kingdom (an unspecified number of 'several thousands'), while the Magnificent Music Machines has one of the smallest (twelve instruments), yet it is probable that the general visitor learnt more about music - albeit of a very particular type - at the latter than at the British Museum. In fairness, the British Museum's policy of integration of material in a collection of its size makes this inevitable; unless a visitor chooses to hunt out a musical instrument specifically, then he must be content to encounter them in passing within the museum's departments, unless

[63]Information sheet 'Parents' and Toddlers Music Group', *The Horniman Museum* (October 1991).

the item is of special importance and displayed distinctly. The 'Royal English Gittern' (c. 1280-1330) and the lyre found in the sixth-century *Sutton Hoo Treasure,* for example, were given separate attention. Encouragingly, when this highlighting does occur, the British Museum relates the instrument to its wider sphere: the *Sutton Hoo* lyre's social history was given (as a source of entertainment to accompany epic poetry), as well as a technical description of its mortice and tenon joints. A reconstruction of a similar instrument, by Arnold Dolmetsch, was placed beside the fragmented original so that a direct comparison could be made. Musically, the British Museum will attract a more eclectic range of visitor interests than the specialist Magnificent Music Machines will, because its collections are so wide-ranging. Each museum reflects the aims of its creation and it is presumed that 'like will attract like': the British Museum is a national institution promoting education and research; the Magnificent Music Machines is a private collection and pursuit of dedicated individuals opened to the public as a means of shared enthusiasm and entertainment.[64]

Encouraging the Musical Layman

Music as a museological topic is thus pliable enough to be adapted to all forms of presentation from the scholastic to the 'theme' museum, in order to respond to the wide diversity in visitors' taste, and occasionally, in the example of the Horniman Museum, to work well on many levels. Encouraging the musical layman requires careful consideration, but it may be made easier if opportunities such as the 1991 Mozart celebrations are seized upon. Mozart made a very enticing carrot to dangle before both the musicologist and the general visitor, as capitalised upon by the British Library and Truro Museum celebratory Mozart exhibitions. Both of these exhibitions were temporary, drawing upon existing material from their collections, though to quite different ends.

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[64]For a fuller account of the Magnificent Music Machines see Chapter 4.

Of the two exhibitions, the Truro Museum display on 'The Age of Mozart' (June - September 1991), was the more ingenious example of how a museum can adapt itself to a musical subject, for Truro Museum has no primary musical collections, nor anything specifically connected with Mozart. Instead, the display was formed by drawing selectively upon existing collections from the period c. 1750-1800 and presenting an historical-social exhibition based quite literally upon the 'Age' in which Mozart lived. Such an approach may seem a little contrived, but in reality it was extremely successful in dealing with everyday objects of the period (glass, ceramics, costume, paintings and drawings) to form a cohesive whole. Only two musical instruments were found in the display - a small portable keyboard and a clarinet of the era, with the museum managing to relate the non-musical material on show to Mozart's music and his personal life through the accompanying text panels. Using this method, analogies were drawn between the way classical sonata-form was mirrored in the neo-classical styles of dress displayed and in the classical designs to be found on ceramics and glass. The opera *The Magic Flute* was linked with a section concerned with special Masonic china,[65] and the dramatic quality of Mozart's operas was paralleled in the contemporary paintings found throughout the gallery, none more so than some of Hogarth's satirical canvasses of eighteenth-century life. Once again, this was an exhibition which could appeal to many different visitor types: the musician would appreciate the comments about classical ideas of form and balance being found in the design and symmetry of ceramic design as in musical sonata-form; while at a simpler though equally valuable level, the general-interest visitor could also observe the sort of china and ornaments Mozart could have used and the style of clothes he would have worn.

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[65]Mozart was a dedicated Freemason.

The exhibition at the British Library, 'Mozart: Prodigy of Nature' (30th August 1991 - 12th January 1992), focused primarily upon its manuscript collections, augmented by numerous loans of associated material. Here, it should be stressed that any kind of book-based or manuscript exhibition is among the most difficult of subjects to display really well; only one part of any book may be shown at a time, and in general, no matter how fascinating the choice of subject, exhibitions consisting solely of books or manuscripts often result in a rather 'flat' and monothematic display in contrast with more three-dimensional artefacts. This, in part, explains the extensive use made of non-manuscript loan material. The British Library segmented its collection under sixteen thematic titles: 'Salzburg', 'The Land of the Clavier', 'The Final Years', etc., presenting a chronological study divisible into two major sections: 'The Salzburg Years 1756-1781' and 'The Vienna Years 1781-1791', wherein the manuscripts were illuminated by the contextual use of other relevant material loaned from many other European collections. In this manner, for example, under the section 'France' were placed the first edition of Mozart's earliest works (the Keyboard and Violin Sonatas K.6 and 7), autograph manuscripts of the *Piano Sonata in A minor* K.310 alongside a contemporary map of Paris, an engraving c. 1764 of his father Leopold with his children, and an early report of Mozart's talent c.1766. As with the Truro Museum exhibition, this interpretation attempted to accommodate all of its visitors' experiences of the 'Great Composer;' although in many ways was hampered by the source material - the manuscripts themselves - because of their innate musical inaccessibility. The autograph scores may be the true highlight of the display for musicologists, but from the layman's point of view it is inevitable that once the initial excitement of seeing something that Mozart actually wrote has passed, then one manuscript does begin to look like the next regardless of how erudite the accompanying text. Here, the 'levels' of approach are biased in favour of the musician. If musicologists visited in order to look at the manuscripts, for the general visitor the interest lay in the rest of the accompanying material; in being

able to *hear* (through headsets) the music from the autograph manuscript of the *Piano Concerto in C Major* played on a contemporary instrument (the *Stein* fortepiano, c.1785-90), bringing to life the printed music, even for those - or maybe especially those - who could not read it.[66]

Music as an Exclusive Language

Although the volume of textual information was great, the British Library Mozart exhibition did try to kindle the interest of the non-musician by aiming the textual information at a 'receptive' though not necessarily classically music-educated audience. Social history was emphasised rather than musical technicalities: a minimum of information was given about the mechanical development of harpsichord-piano action, in favour of details describing how Mozart's compositions for keyboard were influenced by the evolution of the early piano; *this* was made to be the important fact, not the design of the instrument. In a similar fashion were labels describing the changing nature of the concerto movement, where *thematic* and *harmonic* factors were mentioned without pursuing any further analysis. Such terms are fairly self-explanatory, although probably included for the benefit of the musician rather than the layman. It is likely that the museum made a conscious decision not to include weighty analytical dissections of the manuscripts in order to make them approachable and less elitist for the majority of visitors. Even the most ardent 'Mozartian' need not necessarily be able to read music or understand its technical language, so that musical scores may convey only a little of their meaning: apart from their value through *association*, their

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[66]Briefly, this may be contrasted with the 1991 bi-cen. tenary exhibition at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 'Mozart: World of Sound', which focused upon the practical and aural side of the composer and his music. Open for a year, it attracted 120,000 visitors. Infra-red transmitters allowed visitors to tune into music illustrating each section of the exhibition. (The same procedure used at Rock Circus.) Music and text were designed to be of equal value and Compact Disc recordings were made especially of the music heard in the exhibition. [Information supplied by a paper given by Dr. Gerhard Stradner, Director, Kunsthistorisches Museum, CIMCIM Conference, Edinburgh, 6. 6. 94.)

audience is a limited one. It is unfortunate that there is a tendency for people who can read music to assume that everyone else can do so as well, whereas it is, in fact, often a highly exclusive language; and one which should never be ignored in exhibitions of this type. This is not to disclaim the inclusion of manuscripts in 'popular' exhibitions, for they may still be looked upon in a positive light if their function is simplified: at its most basic level, the dots and dashes of music are the physical representation of sound, and as such will always serve as an aesthetic and visual reminder of 'what music looks like' for the non music-reading visitor. It is as close as we can come to a concrete version of the sound in visual terms. At its best, this became an unseen unifying theme for the display of these manuscripts, and naturally there was the pleasure of seeing something genuinely written by Mozart's hand.

Aside from the Mozart exhibitions, an excellent example of how complicated music may be clarified for the visitor, was found in the nearby 'Early Printed Music' section of the British Library. The famous *Old Hall Manuscript* (c.1410), was shown with a detailed and 'academic' label of precise musicological terminology including remarks about 'proportional reduction of note values' and 'mensural notation'. Beside this manuscript was also a copy of a modern performing version of the same work, so that even if the terminology of the original could not be understood by the visitor, at least a direct *visual* comparison could be made of the differences and similarities. This idea could well have been adopted for one of the Mozart autographs for the benefit of its visitors.

In the British Library Mozart exhibition, it was noticeable that many of the large master label panels favoured contemporary quotations by Mozart and his associates rather than any modern interpretations, so that in itself , the exhibition appeared to be viewed from the 'age' of Mozart and not our own. Visitors were therefore free to absorb the language of the eighteenth century without overdue

analysis of the subject. The approach to the display was thus far more subjective than is usual for classical music exhibitions, although, ironically, there was little direct commentary about Mozart's personality, the overall tone being social-historical rather than biographical. The visitor was encouraged to discover the personality behind the music through an increased appreciation of the life and times in which he lived. In this, the British Library accomplished - on a larger and more impressive scale - much the same objective as the regional Truro Museum had done, though using very different source material.

The Commercialisation of Musical Subjects

The final display case in the display of the British Library Mozart exhibition was especially poignant: an illustrated tableau of 'Mozartiana' encapsulated in sundry bric-a-brac in the form of a collage of material, symbolising his constant and continuing popularity. In this way, the commercialisation of his music was represented by a complete spectrum of material, from books of early biographies and opera programmes, to plaster busts and confectionery, summing-up all of the approaches a visitor could take to Mozart. It seemed to be strangely appropriate that so many of the Mozartian frivolities displayed here were more familiar to us than the manuscripts in the main body of the exhibition; and may explain why they were used as the final case and 'parting-shot' of a serious museum display that could run the gamut of visitor attractions from autograph manuscripts to a lock of Mozart's hair. Indeed, there was only a thin line between this and the marketing off-shoot of the Mozartian music games, posters and paraphernalia found in the adjoining library shop; this included a child's guide about the 'Lives of the Great Composers', although the exhibition itself would have been unlikely to have held the attention of many children. However, the merchandise in the shop did serve an additional purpose; it helped to reflect the cult status achieved by Mozart and served as a reminder that museums must cover all aspects of their

potential 'visitor market' in order to be successful. The difficulty with attempting to cater for all tastes can be a shapelessness resulting from approaches that are too diverse and therefore incomplete. This exhibition, at heart, still veered towards the academic approach but the interpretation was not elitist; visitors were still able to learn about and enjoy the display in fairly equal measures. Perhaps the only minor 'populist' fault was that the recordings of Mozart's keyboard music for sale in the shop - and marketed in terms of being the 'outcome' of the manuscripts in the exhibition - were not the same 'authentic' recordings that the visitor had just been listening to. Whilst visiting the exhibition, many visitors were heard to comment enthusiastically about the authentic performance they had listened to on the headsets. It was a pity that marketing had been allowed to overcome accuracy, in this respect, as a means to sell the product.[67]

The Pursuit of Popularity

Music museums may like to believe that they are egalitarian and open to all, but in reality the visitors they attract are mostly preordained. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the polarisation between Western Art Music and Western Popular Music, wherein the in-built prejudices that the former is deserving of a high-brow approach while the latter is unworthy of serious consideration, is personified. Two examples of this polarisation are found in the Russell Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments and Rock Circus, in the interpretation they provide for their visitors.

The Russell Collection is a 'playing' collection presented by a private enthusiast to the University of Edinburgh in 1964. It is housed in the back rooms of St.

[67]The marketing of classical music and its implications for museums is discussed in the Introduction.

Cecelia's Concert Hall in two overcrowded and inaccessible long rectangular rooms.[68] The display is roughly chronological, with a card label giving the name of maker, instrument type and date; there is no other accompanying literature in the display, although a specialist catalogue of the collection may be purchased. The display of the collection is the very antithesis of a commercial approach; it is clear from the display that this collection is thought to be of interest only to the musical specialist, moreover, not just a classical music enthusiast, but a connoisseur of early keyboard instruments. Without the aid of the catalogue - which is scholarly and seems to be designed for the builder of reproduction historical instruments - even a classically well-educated visitor remains ignorant of the basic development in keyboard instruments. This neglect of musical potential is reinforced when it is remembered that this is also a *playing* collection, and yet, aside from special one-off concerts, there is no access for the visitor to be able to hear the sound of these instruments. In reality, visitors to the collection are therefore limited to members of the university's 'Music Faculty' (using this as a resource centre), special interest groups in pre-booked parties and instrument makers. It could not be said that the general public are encouraged in any way (the collection is not even sign-posted outside the Hall), and the few who chance upon it must depart singularly unenlightened.[69]

In its present state, the Russell Collection exists for the specialist visitor; and within this completely elitist and non-commercial approach, has understandably low visitor numbers. When compared with other types of museum, music museums do not attract above average visitor figures, but when they *do*, the

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[68]The current cramped housing conditions of this collection is a major factor in its inaccessibility to the general public. It is hoped that this will be rectified by its eventual re-housing and display in amalgamation with the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

[69]Amusingly, on my last visit, what was thought to be the single attempt at an interpretative display feature of the collection - a table laid out with measuring instruments and charts for making exact drawings of the instruments, turned out to be exactly that - not an exhibit, but work in progress.

musical subject is usually one of mass appeal and saturation marketing: the bi-cen tenary Mozart celebrations and practically anything dealing with popular music. People are most interested and excited by what they hear everyday, (or what the music industry tells them they should be hearing); and in this way, there is immediate identification with a museum display on such a subject. Members of the general public who go to museums only sporadically, will have certain prejudices and particular aims in mind if the subject to be viewed is an unfamiliar one. To accommodate this, it may require the curator to adapt or abandon altogether his own preferences, and, at times even 'compromise' scholarly standing in order to give the visitor what he wants out of an exhibition. Nonetheless, ultimately, it is not a question of museums choosing only populist material and display methods in order to keep up the visitor quota, but of learning how to make existing collections receptive to an often bewildered public.

Most museums have a steady pulse of regular visitors; this is not the market in need of encouragement. The popular museums - in any media - are those that are *active* using play, performance and participation to bring the subject to life. Music is in a unique position to respond to the *active* element of museum interpretation, as increasingly, museums are compelled to move away from the traditional object-based approach in favour of new techniques. In a historical setting, young visitors especially often find history dull unless it is 'sugared' and presented in a more dynamic way. For them, 'hands-on' or performance is a less painful method of absorbing information than through a text panel or adult's guidebook.

In recent years, the *presentation* of a museum collection has all but superseded the tasks of collecting and conservation in terms of importance. Museums have been compelled to do this, for display is the public face of the museum and the means by which the visitors are attracted, and the museum survives. Increasingly, museums are asking 'Were I the visitor, what would I find interesting?', and this

in part explains the targeting of specific visitor groups. At best these groups are diverse (the Horniman Museum), at its most basic, a single group (the Russell Collection). However, it is rare for a music museum to be purely populist in its pursuit of visitors. An exception to this is Rock Circus, which, although not technically a museum, does present a musical story in terms of objects, images and sound for the entertainment of a recognised audience.

Rock Circus

> We will ROCK you. Audio-animatronic moving and static wax figures, lasers, authentic memorabilia, video archive film and personal stereo will surround you and astound you. There's a change of pace at every pace, a new rock at every turn.[70]

Rock Circus is a branch of the 'Madame Tussaud's Company'. It tells the story of rock music using the *musicians* involved as the protagonists of the tale, in the form of stationary and moving (animatronic) wax figures; but above all the story is expressed through the music itself. From the outset, the premise is one of entertaining its visitors, achieved through a saturation publicity and marketing campaign. Large-scale billboards posted all over London proclaim Rock Circus in increasing hyperbole. Its location, housed in the London 'Trocadero Centre', is also of importance, in being a key area for tourism and youth culture in particular: the cultish 'Planet Hollywood' restaurant is situated immediately below it. Already this area has an atmosphere of frenzied activity about it; from the booming music issuing from the building, to the wax figures of pop musicians on the building's balcony staring down moodily over Piccadilly Circus. Despite the expensive cost and an estimated average length of visit of only one hour, there

[70]*Rock Circus Souvenir Guidebook,* (1994).

was, as is usual, a lengthy queue waiting for tickets on the occasion of my visit.[71] Visitor admissions for 1989 (the year of opening) were over 500,000; and over 680,000 in 1993, within which the target group of visitors aged between twenty and thirty years predominated.[72]

At times, the hype is so overwhelming that it verges on the vulgar. On entering the building, each visitor is required to have a photograph taken of themselves with a figure of the late pop star Freddie Mercury. Later, this photograph may be purchased by the visitor as he exits the show. Each visitor is provided with a set of infra-red sensing headphones to be worn throughout the tour; this will provide access to all the music and commentary of the visit aside from the 'live' twenty-minute animatronic show. Curiously, Rock Circus was originally designed without this personal stereo system; yet it is the access to the *music* which gives the impetus for the whole display.[73]

The layout of the first part of the exhibition is spectacular and atmospheric. There is no natural light; the visitor is propelled into a world of lasers, multi-media and showbusiness glitz. The figures are arranged singly and in groups around the floor and balconies, while in the centre a large revolving platform features Stevie Wonder, Elton John and Little Richard in 'action' poses at their respective keyboards.[74] Sometimes the figure will appear in a 'setting', so that the background reflects the character and period of the music and allows the exhibition to display any associated memorabilia. A room display of Buddy Holly being

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[71]1993 ticket prices: Adults £7, Concessionary tickets £ 5.50.

[72]Figures supplied by Martin Ring (*Rock Circus* Front of House Manager), 1994.

[73]' ... the system was discovered in a French museum prior to Rock Circus's opening and the equipment installed before the launch date.' (Letter from Martin Ring, Front of House Manager 9. 3. 94.) Compact disc stereo sound is fed into a transmitter and connected by a modulator into infra-red signals picked-up by the headsets.

[74]Every twenty minutes, from a hidden central plateau in this revolving display, the figure of Elvis Presley appears amid flashing lights and clouds of dry ice. A recording of him singing *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* interrupts all the headsets, regardless of where in the exhibition the visitor may be. It is impossible to ignore it.

Rock Circus: Main auditorium and revolving central platform with figures.

(Reproduced courtesy of Madame Tussaud's *Rock Circus*.)

interviewed, uses an original interview tape and in the contextual setting of a recording studio and its apparatus. Later, *The Beatles* are displayed in a reconstruction of 'The Cavern', their original venue.

A massive wall of thirty-six constantly changing video screens dwarfs the wax figures; and occasionally this will override the visitors' headsets to give a visual and narrative resume of some part of rock history. The cumulative effect of all this (which is deliberately reminiscent of a discotheque in style), is of being bombarded by loud music and fleeting images, a feeling augmented by the almost claustrophobic volume and bustle of the people around you. The cacophony of noise is exciting and confusing at the same time. It is totally removed from the perceived museum setting of space and quiet.

All of the figures here are static, but *movement* and *activity* are implied through the modelling of the figures in their stance and facial expressions, which are highly realistic and suggestive of a sort of 'frozen animation'. Many are shown in the act of performing, with their hands correctly positioned upon pianos or guitars.[75] Further movement is provided by the music heard through the headsets, the changing video screens and the general bustle of the visitors themselves. Rock Circus's success is clearly inspired by the 'group' identity felt towards the music and the instinct to mass together in the 'experience'. It is a communal attraction; visitors come in families and in groups of friends - to go around the display *alone* loses much of the ambience and sense of fun.

Where *Rock Circus* fails in visitor terms, is when it assumes a great deal of previous knowledge. Although the display is roughly chronological (beginning with Bill Haley), which does give a sense of musical change as one trend or sound

[75]The positioning of hands is not arbitrary, but uses the correct 'shape' and fingering of discernible chord configurations.

supersedes the other, there is no written *description* of this taking place. The only text within the exhibition is reserved to record-shaped discs by each figure, giving the name, date and title of the song heard through the headsets: *'The Beatles, Twist and Shout,* 1963.' The unwritten subtext was that musical styles evolve, but rarely the reasons why and how this came to be. For visitors who are not familiar with rock music,[76] the result is one of bewilderment and perhaps even the same sense of alienation felt by non-classical music visitors when viewing a poorly documented classical music exhibition. Further elucidation was provided only when the individual pop artist had made a significantly noteworthy contribution to rock history: Rod Stewart and Eric Clapton, for example, were cited.

Though dealing with stationary wax figures, Rock Circus ironically does manage to make them 'move' by frequently showing the figure in tandem with filmed performance. The relatively recent history of the music involved - of only about the past forty years - has allowed the design creators to draw upon vast resources of archive and contemporary film. Nearly all of the contemporary performers are shown with the pop videos of their latest hit recordings. The importance of the visual image to promote the song is now paramount in musical and museological terms.[77] This works on two levels: the pop videos form part of the exhibition in themselves, they have become museum *objects,* because they are part of the pop music culture whilst also representing music in its true sense as a process of sound and performance. The pop video lends itself to the video medium because it deals predominately with a repetitive, compact category of *song* form rather than longer works.[78] Although these may be combined into a sort of 'song-cycle', the basic

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[76]In terms of visitors to Rock Circus, I would include myself in this category.
[77]See Introduction and Chapter 6.
[78]The novelty of having pictures to accompany and promote music of the popular music industry is not a new idea. Video-jukeboxes showing short films of jazz and dance bands were in fashion in the U.S.A. during the 1930s.

unit is rarely more than about four minutes in duration, making it ideally suited to the short video 'soundbite' in the context of a museum display.

The second part of the Rock Circus experience is an animated theatre show, wherein moving wax figures (animatronics), narrate and enact the most important moments from the history of pop music. This is marketed as the technological and entertainment highlight of the visit: the 'Music Theatre' is Europe's largest revolving auditorium where rock music's greatest artists ' ...sing, move and perform for you'.[79] The seating for this small theatre is placed on a revolving platform so that the *audience* moves rather than the stage.[80] In this way the audience can move quickly from one scene to another to see the many performances that make up the twenty-minute show. The 'Theatre Show' is the final exhibition. Once the visitor has entered the theatre he cannot return to the rest of the exhibition. At this point, guides organise the visitors with strict control; and this unfortunately gives the impression of trying to move the visitors on through a production line. It is not possible to be reflective, or, having seen the 'Theatre Show', where the story of pop music is described, go back into the first part of the exhibition with a now educated eye and ear.

> As with the headsets the animatronic figures are used to bring alive the exhibition and excite the visitor's imagination. Many visitors look at these moving figures in complete awe as they haven't seen anything like it before.[81]

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[79]*Rock Circus Promotional Brochure*, 1993.
[80]The action takes place on three stage sets, while the auditorium in the centre revolves. Seating is in three sections for 120 people meaning that three separate audiences can be seeing different parts of the show at any one time. (*Rock Circus Souvenir Guidebook*).
[81]Letter from Martin Ring (Front of House Manager), 9. 3. 94.

The 'Theatre Show' utilises every recent development in high-technology: massive multi video screens, stereo sound, laser projection and the animatronic figures themselves which, using synchronised head, hands and mouth movements, are disconcertingly realistic.[82] The show takes the form of 'narrators' who describe the story of rock and pop music, illustrated by key musicians from this history performing their songs. With a schedule of only twenty minutes their story must necessarily be a rapid one, and the tone is therefore upbeat and confident, reiterating that rock music - in preference to any other - is the 'music of the people'. As the animatronic Tim Rice's narrator says in the opening address, 'And how many Number Ones did Schubert have?'[83] The succession of figures in the show changes fairly rapidly and there are occasionally changes in 'texture', for example, a back-lit silhouette of Elvis Presley dancing, and the waving hands of pop fans appearing at the front of the stage swaying in time to the music as if at a live concert; it is slick and professional.[84] Again, this show assumes a fairly detailed previous knowledge about pop history; many of the characters appearing were not named and the succession of music so rapid that it was easy to confuse the song and the performer. The only concession to the social history of the subject was a brief allusion (made by a 'Janis Joplin' animatronic narrator), to the 'flower power' rallies and drug culture of the 1960s. This Rock Circus is a circus of great movement, activity, sound and voices, albeit one which changes before you have had time to examine or think about the acts too closely. Such a method creates a veneer of realism.

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[82]They work by converting electronic signals into movement through a computer which is also programmed to synchronise the movement to the music.

[83]Commentary, Rock Circus 'Theatre Show', 1993.

[84]In an attraction relying upon so much technology, the only technical (though amusing) hitch encountered during the show was when a large pair of inflated 'Mick Jagger' lips surrounding the stage area refused to deflate and had to be manually manoeuvred.

The packaging of Rock Circus is also very emotive. In contrast with the perceived neutral and untouchable museum space, visitors are encouraged to see, hear and touch their pop heroes.[85] The visitor has to be alert to the constant changes taking place around him, be it in the music, video screens or animatronic figures. All of the displays are active, never passive: they either *do* things, or are linked to some sort of activity to which the visitor must respond, rather than having to create his own sense of movement and apply it to a stationary thing. In many ways, the imaginary process is created *for* the visitor; the displays are not intended to make him think. Rock Circus is successful, not just because it glorifies contemporary and popular music, but because its impetus is the emotional and sensory-related side of music which elicits the most immediate visitor response and identification. By contrast, classical music collections and the more formal museum exhibitions, do not feel free to treat their 'serious' material in such an obviously primeval way. The root of Rock Circus's popularity lies in its use of *live* music. Without this, the displays would be reduced to a series of static and silent effigies, which work well in the more usual setting of Madame Tussaud's Waxworks Museum, but not when the category is specifically a musical one. In popular terms, visitors attending musical exhibitions must have access to the music itself. The exhibition is possible *because* of the music rather than the collection of models; the figures are a way of *visualising* and making concrete the music. This exhibition was not created from an existing collection, but created to satisfy a market of pop hungry people:

> The Tussauds Group researched the subject to a high degree and when asked on what theme the public would like to see a new attraction based, they predominately replied 'popular music'. Pop music is an international language and close to everyones hearts therefore giving us a healthy client

[85]'Hands-On' is provided quite literally in a 'Wall of Hands' display of metal-cast imprints of a number of pop stars' hands. Visitors are invited to place their own hands in those of their favourite stars.

> base. As Rock Circus builds upon its success, I think it is only a matter of time before 'imitation' begin to appear around the world in the form of museums and attractions. The Tussauds Group is recognised as a leader in the field, though I personally don't understand why operators in the past have not tackled the subject of pop music.[86]

Clearly there is a demand for this type of musical enterprise. Nevertheless, Rock Circus is an attraction not a museum, and as such, in indulging in a commercial and populist approach, differs from a typical museum of music in several areas:

The interpretation of the subject is minimal and simplistic, using no text other than the name discs by the figures. All other information is verbal with the narrator always being subservient to the music. This is a complete reverse of the usual museum scenario where text and description will always far outweigh the music being considered. In a pop display, however, it is taken for granted that the music will be part of the 'visiting experience', whereas classical collections are not expected to include this to the same extent. 'Also, cultural conditioning' plays its part in both the preconceptions of the visitors and the curators.

Further deviance from usual museum practice is found in the modernity of the subject matter itself, and in the small number of original artefacts. Historically, music museums have been notoriously negligent of twentieth-century music, moreso if the music is 'popular' instead of classical. Museums are built upon collections of original material and it is a generally held impression that museums are concerned only with things that are *old*. By comparison, with the exception of

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[86]Letter from Martin Ring (Front of House Manager), 9. 3. 94. It was noted that figures of rock stars were among the most popular in Madame Tussauds - when the singer Michael Jackson came to unveil his image the crowds stopped the London traffic. The project began by asking Project Consultant and popular music historian Paul Gambaccini to draw-up a short-list of the fifty musicians felt to have had the greatest impact on rock music over the past forty years. (*Rock Circus Souvenir Guidebook*, p. 4.)

some original 1950s record album covers (used as background colour rather than exhibition material), nothing in Rock Circus is more than a few years old. A number of pop stars have donated items of clothing and guitars, but these aside, there are no original artefacts. Rock Circus, by its nature, cannot offer the same facilities or claim the same scholarly aims museums do, but for many visitors it is as much a place of homage as the British Museum.

Financial success is the motivation for this attraction, as increasingly museums are having to make themselves financially viable in the competitive visitor arena. There is a danger that it may fall into the 'cattle-wagon' approach in comparison with less commercial - though unfortunately less crowded - museums. Visitors are propelled through this exhibition by the sheer volume of people about them; there is a subconscious message to 'move on' and a lack of any textual information, which might encourage the visitor to linger. The exhibition is designed to require only a short concentration span by spoon-feeding snippets of information. Narration - via the headsets - does have the advantage of conveying information quickly and efficiently, though without further textual backup it is easy to miss hearing parts of the narrative or song and have to wait until the relevant part returns on the loop system. Having been in and out of the exhibition in under one hour, the visitor's head is saturated with music, figures and sheer technical wizardry: it is simultaneously exhausting and exhilarating. The visitor departs with the feeling of having gone through an *experience* rather than of having learned any solid facts.

> Rock Circus is where the spirit of Rock speaks to you, sings to you, plays to you and touches you.[87]

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[87]*Rock Circus Souvenir Guidebook*,p.2.

Above all, Rock Circus stresses the practical and performance-related aspects of music, because *this* is what the public wishes to experience. It has to be financially successful to survive,[88] and so has concentrated upon entertainment rather than education in its display and interpretation. Rock Circus knows that its audience is already knowledgeable about its type of music and that they visit to experience it, rather than to learn new things. The most voracious and frequently visiting audience will be the fans, who probably know far more about the music that interests them than do the managers and designers of the establishment.

For this type of attraction the future is a positive one. In comparison with many classical music collections, it intends to pursue contemporary music of the future. 'The exhibition will be continually up-dated as new recording artists make their names in the history books of the pop industry.'[89] The *Rock Circus Guidebook* even encourages visitors to suggest future inclusions for the exhibition: the collection must reflect what the public wants to see; this guarantees its success and security. In what has become a 'leisure industry' market, if traditional music museums have to compete against musical spectaculars such as this, then they must either make more dynamic and user-friendly displays of their existing collections or try to introduce more popular and contemporary music. When the wealth of the popular music industry in this country is considered - with its possibilities for sponsorship and loans of material - then the scant attention paid to popular music in museum exhibitions appears to be particularly negligent. It would appear that, in general, museums are reluctant to tackle contemporary and popular music, leaving the populist end of the market to the obviously commercial enterprises. In Liverpool, The Beatles Story - A Magical Experience, for example, is a 'pilgrim' attraction in much the same light as Rock Circus,

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[88]Rock Circus is a costly enterprise. Each animatronic figure takes a year to make and costs £200,000. (*Rock Circus Souvenir Guidebook,* 1993.)
[89]Letter from Martin Ring, Front of House Manager, 9.3.94 .

employing the same highly technological, multi-media and visitor-oriented features alongside a 'collection' that is not original but created to meet the visitors' needs.

> The Beatles Story is a unique venue. Ideal for corporate or private parties. In a replica of the original Cavern Club your party can really get into the mood of the 'swingin' 60s'. With facilities for a buffet/bar and dancing, packages can be customised to suit your individual requirement.[90]

Above all, the attraction stresses the activities available and the visitor's sense of personal involvement with the exhibition. The publicity - in contrast to the way that musical exhibitions are normally portrayed - sounds both spontaneous and enjoyable; visitors suspend their disbelief and actually undergo a 'nostalgic journey'.

> Imagine experiencing the most sensational story the pop world has ever known ...Re-live the Fab Four's meteoric rise to fame with a nostalgic journey....Take a trip to Hamburg, feel the Cavern beat, experience Beatlemania and tune into flower power.[91]

Serious musical museum examinations of popular music are still rare, although in recent years it has been realised that a younger museum and gallery visiting public can be encouraged by holding exhibitions centring upon music of the pop culture and of pop culture in itself. For example, Glasgow Museums have put on a concert by an 'indie' band at the Burrell Collection, accompanying this with an exhibition of album-sleeve artwork.[92] Popular music exhibitions also work well when they are rooted in nostalgia: the travelling exhibition 'It's Only Rock and Roll' is 'A celebration of forty years of rock music' and includes memorabilia,

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[90]Brochure for The Beatles Story, 1993.
[91]*Ibid.*
[92]*The Museums Journal*,(August 1994), p.13.

fashion items, sound equipment, a juke-box and a scooter bike.[93] Most importantly it also features twenty-four panels of pictorial press photos which should educate and inform as they entertain; a combination of academic reasoning with emotive visual stimuli.

[93]'West Midlands Area Museums Service Touring Exhibition', *The Museums Journal*(September 1994), p.viii.

CHAPTER 3

DISPLAY AND INTERPRETATION: HOW SUCCESSFULLY DO MUSIC MUSEUMS EXHIBIT THEIR COLLECTIONS?

The Museums Association defines a museum as being '... an institution which collects, documents, preserves, exhibits and interprets material evidence and associated information for the public benefit.'[94] When a museum works for the *public benefit,* the most obvious evidence of this, from the perspective of its visitors, are the visible factors of how well the collection is displayed and interpreted. This chapter reviews some of the ways in which the museums studied employed their musical holdings. The discussion is concerned with the practical nature of the display, wherein the musical subject matter is treated as 'object', concrete material, rather than as sound or musical entity. Attention will also be given to the use of associated material in the context of musical displays and the use of 'authentic' room settings.

Museum Display

'Use bigger lettering on the labels, move them to eye level, try to show objects in some type of musical context and improve the general conditions for viewing'[95] is the summation of recommendations for improved display advocated in *Museums of Music.* It goes on to describe four broad types of presentation which may be summarised as follows:

a) Displayed to facilitate study of instrumental appearance and design. Conventional 'glass-case' style; no access to sound.

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[94]This is the definition adopted at the Museums Association A.G.M. in 1984. It is also the definition adhered to by the *Museums and Galleries Commission Guideline for a Registration Scheme for Museums in the United Kingdom* (March 1989), existing to establish minimum standards for museums.

[95]Harrison Powley, correspondent cited in *Museums of Music,*p.43.

b) Conventional (a) with additional interpretative features - e.g. access to sound.

c) Playing Collection - accessible to student or performer.

d) Theme Display - where instruments and other material are used contextually or for historic reconstruction'. Includes Birthplace Museums.

Types 'a' and 'd' lend themselves most readily to the study of museum 'objects' discussed in this chapter,[96] whilst also being, in themselves, the most polarised of the above groups. The criterion of craftsmanship underlies the existence and interpretation of both the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Ranger's House musical collections. Although these collections are designed primarily *to be looked at,* neither have the large volume of material of the university or academic collection, nor the musically complex text which usually accompanies studious material. As with all Fine Arts, 'craft' musical instruments are more likely to be left to speak for themselves, and there is a danger that for the non-specialist, without elucidation, these items may simply degenerate into a series of 'pretty things'. Musical theme displays have, by contrast, the potential to display their collection in a less pre-ordained way; and their material need not take the form of musical instruments - the Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum boasts only three - but can include all types of musical ephemera and associated items. It is unfortunate therefore, for the theme museums, that *Museums of Music* cannot seem to overcome the cult of the musical instrument in museological circles, to see the potential of alternative - and complementary - other material. Here, its *Review* is concerned with only how well the *musical instruments* work with other material in a themed context, rather than any idea of a 'theme' in its own right: for example, in the concept of a musician's Birthplace Museum, wherein disparate themes and material combine to give an impression of a life and work. The *Review's* emphasis is misguided in always placing non-instrumental material in a

[96]Playing Collections and exhibitions with audio facilities are discussed in the following chapter.

subservient role, for in such cases the instruments are not of importance *as* instruments, but as part of a grander scheme.

It is true to say that themed or contextual music displays are more commonly visited by the non-specialist than are purely musical collections. For this reason alone, it is important that even small musical collections of this type are well displayed and interpreted, for they may well act as a springboard to visiting other museum collections. The introduction of social-historical comment into academic styled museums is also highly advisable, if these institutions are to encourage a wider audience:

> ... even the most exceptional example of an eighteenth-century oboe, displayed side by side with many other apparently very similar instruments is hard to appreciate for someone who is hardly familiar with what a typical modern oboe should look like, far less an example of an oboe designed by Hendrik Richters.[97]

The high-density display of the academic museum is undoubtedly off-putting to the non-specialist, who may feel himself overwhelmed by instruments and text. Regardless of the quality of a museum's collection, it is better to have fewer instruments on display that are well set-out and described, than it is to have a cramped mass of material. 'Improving the general conditions for viewing' is important: if it is also a museum's policy to show an optimum number of instruments without the orientation provided by contextual input, then it must be accepted that the audience will be a very limited one.

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[97]*Museums of Music, p.* 50.

Museum Display Policy - *Gloucester Folk Museum*

The criterion for how a museum chooses to interpret its material collections is obviously dependent upon the scope of the collection, and individual display policy of the museum. In music museums with large instrumental holdings, the usual method of display is to group instruments either by type (strings, woodwind, brass, percussion) as found in the Edinburgh University Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum; or by the way in which the instrument makes its sound,[98] as found in the Horniman Museum. Instrumental musical collections also tend to be chronological in display (the Edinburgh University Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum), whenever substantial numbers of instruments are gathered together and the premise is an historical one. This can be rather restrictive and predictable in display terms - the chronological collections are usually the larger academic collections where this is the most practical and obvious approach - and so it is frequently the *smaller* collections (the Ranger's House, the Magnificent Music Machines), that feel able to take greater liberties in presenting their holdings in diverse or unique ways. The small collection of under forty instruments once used by the 'Frampton Volunteers Band' in 1798, now housed in Gloucester Folk Museum is a good example of this: the collection can either be used as a display of instruments in its own right, or as part of a social-historical display illustrating Gloucester's military past in conjunction with the museum's other associated military items, relating to the Napoleonic Wars. The present curator of the museum[99] has a definite policy of varying the approaches taken towards a display in the belief that diversity creates interest. He is aided in this by the fact that the social-history approach taken towards the instruments also

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[98]See Chapter 2, footnote 10.

[99]The present curator is Christopher Morris who gave me access to the 'Frampton Volunteer' instruments (currently in store) and described their previous role in museum exhibitions in September 1991.

includes a substantial use of associated material - often of a non-musical nature - to be used in context with the instruments creating an integrated display. Typically, a display on the theme of the 'Frampton Volunteers' would include: a general background to the period; the reasons behind their formation; and a brief description of the instruments: Item, Date, Maker and Use. The interpretation of the instruments would incorporate ideas on the type of music the 'Frampton Volunteers' performed, and the use of music in times of war as a morale-booster. In the past, the instruments were displayed beside the related militia of regimental colours and swords so that the whole formed a bright, eye-catching display; the varied visual textures of banners and uniforms with clarinets and horns giving a tableau of battle. Ideally, this is how a permanent display of the instruments would be presented, but at present about two thirds of the 'Frampton Volunteer Collection', including all of the instruments, is in store due to the constraints of a limited display space, and concern for the conservation of such delicate material.[100] The option of 'cosmetic' restoration is unnecessary - and ethically questionable - for it would add nothing to their importance as social-historical material, and the considerable financial outlay required to achieve a playable standard is unwarranted.

The Interpretation of Material Collections

Gloucester Folk Museum's only other musical holdings are a small collection of radios and gramophones. Encouragingly, the curator believes in actively collecting for the future by acquiring further relatively recently-made items; 1940s and 50s hi-fi equipment, for example. The resulting rather idiosyncratic handful of items has been used in a number of different temporary exhibitions; and is an

[100]There are many conservation problems associated with musical instruments. Old instruments are often fragile and when made up of many different component parts, these can easily be lost or damaged. Also, wood and metal require quite separate conservation and storage requirements, so if an instrument is of 'mixed-media', (for example, the clarinet), these problems are intensified.

excellent demonstration of how supposedly 'limited' material may be adapted to suit a number of causes: the early gramophones have been included in displays illustrating the evolution of mechanical technology, and also as part of the 'furniture' in room-settings of c.1914 and the 1930s.

Such flexible use of material is possible because there is no fixed idea of how the collection should be interpreted; this is probably the greatest advantage that a social-historical criterion has over other styles and categories of museum presentation. Drawing different interpretations out of limited collections is paradoxically easier for the eclectic collection of Gloucester Folk Museum than it is for the comprehensive holdings of the University of Edinburgh or the Victoria and Albert Museum, where the display styles are defined by their systematic collecting policies and the consistent quality of their material. In this respect, 'museums with music collections' benefit over the single subject 'music museum' in having the opportunity to use the additional resources of their non-musical holdings to create new dimensions in display. Theoretically, this could engender countless possibilities for the combination of materials: it would be possible for the Victoria and Albert Museum to place a mediaeval instrument against a background depiction of musicians on a stained-glass window of the same period, or to place an eighteenth-century violin next to a piece of costume contemporary to it. Such practices may be employed to change subtly the emphasis of the display (through substituting social-historical *themes* for the more usual purely musical or decorative categories), thereby creating interesting visual cross-references for the visitor.

The inclusion of associated and non-musical material in music exhibitions is a practice of increasing frequency. This material may take many forms, but in general it exists in order to add further contextual and sympathetic information to a display, thereby helping to enhance the visitors' understanding and enjoyment of

the principal exhibits. Such 'associated material' may be divided into two categories: firstly, *musical material,* which includes scores, concert programmes, instrument cases and all other sorts of musical ephemera; and secondly, *non-musical material,* which can encompass practically anything that is socially or historically connected to the main collection and is made relevant *because* of that association. Together, these items are used to create various degrees of background information for the main display. In academic museums, their use may be to 'soften' the look of a taxonomic method of presentation, by humanising the display for the visitor through the use of additional social-historical artefacts. This approach is usually a successful one; it is important to remember that the instruments in glass cases were once played by real people.[101]

Frequently, the most rewarding museum collections studied were those that made use of associated material. This includes the display found at the Ranger's House ('the Dolmetsch Collection'), which may be compared with the presentation of comparable material found in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The Ranger's House ('The Dolmetsch Collection')

The Ranger's House at Greenwich is home to the 'Dolmetsch Collection'; it is comprised of about one hundred and twenty instruments under a criterion of craftsmanship and applied art. The collection is described simply as 'A display of musical instruments from the 'Dolmetsch Collection' recently purchased by the

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[101]A vital source for illustrating music through its changing attitudes and fashions as a social commentary, may be found in Fine Art Museums and Galleries. (The Wallace Collection, London has particularly fine musical examples.) Paintings featuring musical subjects and instruments are an invaluable source of commentary on instrumental design, date, performance practice and social context. Some music museums already do draw upon art from a contemporary period as associated material to illustrate their displays (e.g. the Ranger's House). It is a practice which should be encouraged.

Horniman Museum in the period rooms at Ranger's House.'[102] Thus, it is stressed that the setting is an appropriately historical one, in keeping with the instruments, and as such, shows how an aesthetic environment may be played upon to compliment its collection. The Ranger's House is fortunate in having what might be termed a 'ready-made atmosphere'; one that it has used to its best advantage. The collection is small and specialised; it is dispersed carefully throughout the house in small tableau groups and in different, though always picturesque rooms, so that the visitor encounters thoughtfully chosen small gatherings of material rather than the instruments together *en masse*. In this way, the collection appears to be 'special' simply because it is not abundant, and the visitor does not have to absorb the whole of the collection at once: there is an air of anticipation when moving from one room to another.

Although the non-keyboard instruments are still housed in glass cases, the 'Dolmetsch Collection' gives the impression of being in a 'room setting' because the building is totally sympathetic towards a display concerned with applied art. In the grand main hall on the ground floor, a Double Manual Harpsichord is displayed, watched over by a number of the 'Suffolk Collection of Jacobean Portraits'. Instantly, this gives an 'aesthetic' appearance to the whole room, (despite the instruments and paintings being from different periods); together they help to create an historical empathy between the visitor and the exhibits. The uncluttered space of this hall also allows the keyboard instruments room to breathe, in contrast with the majority of collections wherein a lack of space inevitably necessitates closely grouped displays. However, for larger instruments - like the harpsichord found here - this would look claustrophobic; the 'Dolmetsch Collection' is fortunate in having an extensive display area, for a collection can only be displayed within the confines of available space. This

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[102]Frances Palmer, *Guidebook: The Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments* (*Horniman Museum*, 1981), p.1.

space dictates the 'look' and sometimes the interpretation of the material;[103] here, the Ranger's House itself is also on show.

Perhaps in keeping with this period room setting, the labels on the instruments are hand-written, and provide a minimum of information:

> Double Manual Harpsichord
>
> Made London 1772 by Kirkman (1710-92)
>
> Lent by Horniman Museum

The only other instrument in the main hall - a grand piano, Stodart c.1790 - had a copy of some hand-written eighteenth-century keyboard music open upon it; a direct way of using written music as associated material in tandem with the type of instrument it was composed for. It is a simple method, yet not one that was found in any prominence in other music collections.

Clearly, the Ranger's House has the asset of space. Creating the right look for musical material such as this is very important. The Ranger's House had a choice of two different ways in which to approach its collection: either an academic approach, one that would have been quite suitable when considering the specialist nature of the material, of interest primarily to musicologists and craftsmen; or alternatively, an aesthetic approach, relying on the beauty of the instruments and the atmosphere of their setting to appeal to the senses of its visitors. The latter style is initially much more empathetic, but it is negligent of the curious, who will want to find out more about the instruments than is presently on offer. The label on the harpsichord was sufficient, but it could easily have been a little more

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[103]The lordly exhibition space afforded the keyboard instruments of the 'Dolmetsch Collection' may be contrasted with the cramped conditions of the Russell Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments, as an example of how factors as basic as museum space can affect the atmosphere and 'reading' of an instrument by the visitor.

expansive and enlightened the visitor about what musical pieces the instrument would have played, who wrote for it, or in what way it was different from the later period Stodart grand piano. It is likely that a general visitor will be interested in comments along these lines of enquiry, rather than the manufacturer's name and date, the concerns of the specialist. However, the advantage of the aesthetic approach towards display is in its apparent simplicity and sometimes immediate visitor rapport. In the main hall, there was a pleasant feeling that the person playing the music at the Stodart piano had just stepped outside for a moment and might shortly return. In this respect, the addition of lengthy text panels in this particular room would have been intrusive; but they could well be included elsewhere as an introduction both to the 'Dolmetsch Collection' and the main hall.

The main body of the 'Dolmetsch Collection' was housed on the first floor in a number of small rooms; again without any major text panels and with a minimum of labelling. The instruments on display here were selective, giving the visitor the impression - as indeed is the case - that each instrument had been chosen as being specifically good in its own right. This helped to create an awareness and appreciation of the quality and design of the instruments on show, which the more usual practice of having row upon row of glass cases does not usually accomplish, regardless of the quality of their contents. A case of woodwind in this collection, for example, contained only a set of bagpipes, a six-keyed bassoon, an alto flute and a one-keyed flute. The display offered some of the best examples observed of using associated material in a sympathetic manner: several of the cases became a setting for a collage effect, wherein, for example, a display of dancing masters' kits[104] was placed against an illustrative backdrop of eighteenth-century life consisting of prints of famous musicians (Dr Arne), and original copies of popular songs - *The Cobblers Cud* and *Mad Bess* by Henry Purcell. Often, it is the

[104]A stringed instrument resembling a 'thin' violin, favoured by dancing masters for its portability.

associated material which forms the focal point for the display: a print of the Hogarth engraving *The Enraged Musician* was used as a centrepiece in one display case, depicting townspeople playing upon shawms, rattles, drums and bells, reminding the visitor humorously how important a part of everyday life music was in the eighteenth-century. Texturally, it is always striking to mix different shapes and dimensions of visual objects; and so this style was continued in the free-standing exhibits found in the room settings. In one tableau, paintings, ceramics and etchings were combined with a spinet, a guitar and a bass viol, so that the theme of applied art appeared almost to have seeped out of the musicological collection and into its surroundings. Clearly, paintings and drawings work best when they encapsulate what would be complex or dull in prose. Thus, a copy of the *Study for a Portrait of Carl Abel* (the great German viol player of the 1760s) by Thomas Gainsborough, was shown beside a viol from the same period: the image is immediate.[105]

Ambiguities in the 'Dolmetsch Collection'

The interpretation of the 'Dolmetsch Collection' was concerned with visual impact through simplicity. Unfortunately, this approach did cause some complications resulting in an occasional vagueness as to what exactly the visitor was looking at.

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[105]More recently, encouraging use is being made of pictorial references for musical instruments. For example, *The Research Group of Organography and Musical Iconography* based at the Musée Nationales des Artes, Paris, is currently undertaking a scientific review of such, including: '... studies of instruments; the representation of music in the visual arts...[applied to] instrumental making; instrumental acoustics; the history of collections; restoration; and the collection and analysis of musical subjects taken from visual arts.' So far forty-seven museums have taken part, in subjects as diverse as French Painting up to 1790 and the influence of twentieth-century electronic instruments on the development of analogue synthesisers. (Paper given by Florence Getreau, Musées Nationales des Artes, CIMCIM, Edinburgh 7.6.94.)
The cross- fertilisation of arts genres should lead to a better understanding and presentation of musical material. For example, The National Gallery's series of illustrated lectures 'Music Observed: Music and Renaissance Painting ', July - August 1993.

To appreciate this, it should be explained that the collection may be divided into three groups:

a) Original instruments for use as examples of their type and for performance.
b) Original instruments restored, repaired or adapted by Arnold Dolmetsch.
c) Modern instruments constructed by Dolmetsch in accordance with earlier principles.

These categories are quite distinct, but this was not made clear in their display. A great deal of the labelling was ambiguous: under the heading 'Restored under the direction of Arnold Dolmetsch' was a Violino Piccolo (English c.1800), inscribed 'Dolmetsch 1915'. It was unclear if this was a copy or a restoration, for 'restored' implies one thing, the inscription 'Dolmetsch 1915' another. This lack of clarification was also noticeable in the distinct lack of any general background information, aside from that available in the guidebook. There were no introductory or master labels for any of the musical material, although curiously, such labels existed in an 'introductory' room for the 'Suffolk Collection of Portraits' which shares the premises of the Ranger's House, giving a detailed history and technical analysis of the paintings. If so for them, then why not for the instruments? Arnold Dolmetsch's work and ideas are of special importance and supply the *raison d'être* for the entire collection; it is imperative that some degree of textual information is given on these points, (if only for those visitors who do not have the aid of the guidebook); it is necessary to assist the visitor in his understanding of the collection. For aesthetic considerations, if preferred, such introductory labels could also be placed in a separate entrance room instead of alongside the instruments, following the pattern of the 'Suffolk Collection'.

The art of museum labelling is subjective. What a label chooses to say - or not to say - is the most common method of communication between exhibit and visitor.

Ideally, if the label is descriptive rather than a repeat of its catalogue entry, then it should try to encourage the visitor to *think* about the object creatively. The visitor should depart with more knowledge and ideas about the subject, than he arrived with; if he leaves with only the knowledge of 'what old instruments look like', then the presentation is inadequate. It is unfortunate, that in an increasingly visual and spoon-fed Western world, people are less inclined to read exhibition labels - thirty seconds of scan-reading is thought to be the average attention span - therefore to stand any chance, they must be extremely well argued and presented. Factors as basic as label height, size, typeface and colour play a major part in this.

The 'Dolmetsch Collection' Guidebook

Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940), was one of the first craftsmen in the nineteenth century to recognise the importance of early instruments and their 'authentic' performance. The details surrounding this fact, though not stated directly in the exhibition itself, are found in the guidebook to the collection.[106] This small guidebook was one of the most lucid and informative examples of the genre encountered, combining a social-historical background with musical facts in terms understandable by the layman. The book's introduction is particularly beneficial in its concise appraisal of musical history; it would be excellent as an introductory master label for the exhibition, which was sorely in need of a frame of reference and 'names' a visitor might latch on-to:

> ... [Dolmetsch's] Victorian counterparts held an evolutionary view; 'real' music started with Beethoven or possibly Mozart, as if anything earlier was an imperfect attempt to reach the nineteenth-century ideal. Purcell's music was known only to scholars and was never performed. J.S. Bach

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[106]Frances Palmer *Guidebook: The Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments* (Horniman Museum, 1981), p.1.

> was a 'musician's musician', the viol was a failed ancestor of the violin. The 'early music' which was performed appeared in massively re-orchestrated form [Handel's *Messiah*] and was often given with 'improved' harmonies. In other words, the full wealth of our musical heritage was not within the reach of the average concert goer.[107]

From this, it would appear that the Ranger's House has made a decision to provide all the detailed information a visitor would require in the guidebook, and thus retain the 'uncluttered' look of the display. This does work (for the people with the guidebook), but it is arguable that it is the 'musically oriented' visitor who will purchase the guidebook as a matter of course. whilst the casual visitor will not; thereby receiving only an *impression* of the collection, devoid of the elucidation usually supplied by text. Although, because of its vast terminology, it can be difficult to explain music simply, the guidebook commentary does succeed in doing this; and with knowledge, the way in which the collection is perceived is enhanced.[108] A few 'visitors' copies' of the guidebook dispersed throughout the exhibition, or a cheaply produced pamphlet would provide a solution, although, of course there is no guarantee that the visitor would read these optional communications. Placing labels *in* the show cases or near by them is still the best way to ensure that the visitor will read them.[109]

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[107] *Ibid.*, p.2.

[108] A first visit around the 'Dolmetsch Collection' was made without the help of the guidebook; a second visit *with* the guidebook. With explanation, the grouping of instruments became more than arbitrary and a sense of development could be traced when moving from room to room. The extra information made the impact of the collection far more effective.

[109] The National Trust has an excellent system of 'recyclable' pamphlets. These pamphlets, usually about six pages long, are available as a free alternative to the more detailed guidebook. The visitor may choose either to keep his free pamphlet or return it at the end of his visit so that future visitors may benefit. It is, of course, initially expensive to produce these guides, but a visitor who has an informative visit may be more inclined to return or to purchase the standard guidebook.

As historical-musical background, the guidebook states that 'Room 1' of the exhibition intends to show the 'Dolmetsch Collection' as items of craftsmanship and also to illustrate the changes taking place in music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries:

> Essentially music before 1600 tended to be conceived as a series of interlocking melodies of equal importance which were combined to form a pleasing whole. The harmonies produced by the moving parts at any given moment, what we might term the 'vertical' element was of secondary importance. As the seventeenth-century progressed there was a gradual change of emphasis; one line was regarded as the melody and it was supported by a strong but not necessarily tuneful bass, while the remaining parts filled in the harmonies. Even such great composers as J.S.Bach who laid great emphasis on the melodic elements of each line, used the movement of the harmonies as the framework around which the music was constructed.[110]

In this way, the guidebook goes on to explain the change from polyphonic to single melodic lines and the evolution in instrumental design needed to produce a greater range and volume of sound. It also says *why* this was necessary; information often omitted from guidebooks, but vital here when the performance-bound nature of Dolmetsch's instruments is remembered. The book's description of individual instruments focuses upon their *practical* aspects instead of the more usual academic concentration on technical details. For example, the recorder is describes as being:

> ... a virtuoso solo instrument until well into the eighteenth-century when it fell victim to changes in musical fashion. It can only be played

[110]Frances Palmer, *The Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments*, p.3.

> effectively at an optimum breath pressure and attempts to play loud and soft merely result in bad tuning.[111]

Many visitors, whether expert or not, will be familiar with the recorder and its sound. The guidebook's comments neatly explain both the instrument's history and its well-known wandering pitch in an approachable way. It is not necessary here to explain why the instrument was superseded by the flute or why overblowing affects its acoustics. Dolmetsch perfected the modern treble recorder in 1919 (based upon the Baroque instrument), and by 1926 the full range of the recorder family. The fact that most of our subsequent modern recorders have been based upon his design should have been brought to the attention of the visitor; for many visitors perhaps the only instrument they will ever have owned is the 'infamous' Dolmetsch recorder of their schooldays. This type of information may cause the visitor to go back and look again at the instrument, or relate it to their own experience.

The 'Dolmetsch Collection's' display is highly successful at some levels; the general ambience of the display and the instrumental tableaux using prints and drawings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were particularly rewarding. Nonetheless, it lacks immediate and accessible information, especially when contrasted with its live-in tenant 'The Suffolk Collection'. The visitor is able to see a great many beautiful things but does not really learn very much about them, and it is arguable that Arnold Dolmetsch's aspirations to make early music better known and the craftsmanship of the instruments better appreciated, would justify a little more clarification than is provided at present.

The Victoria and Albert Museum: Dichotomy in Display

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[111] *Ibid.*, p.4.

The Victoria and Albert Museum's musical collection numbers about three-hundred and fifty instruments, almost half of which was amassed in 1851 in the wake of the Great Exhibition. Its holdings are especially important in musical terms because they include the 'National Collection of Musical Instruments' for Great Britain.[112] Although these instruments are of an exceptionally high academic standard, and are indeed of 'national importance', the collection is still relatively small and specialised; further it is catalogued as part of the 'Department of Furniture', of which the musical instruments constitute only a small part. It is understandable, that the Victoria and Albert as a museum of design and craftsmanship should label its instruments in this manner; yet it is because these items are *instruments*, designed to create music while *incidentally* being supreme examples of applied art, that the museum finds itself exhibiting the material as a collection in its own right. How successfully it manages to combine these two distinct perspectives must be considered.

The ambiguous position of the music collection is a point of debate within the museum itself. The 'Dolmetsch Collection', dealing with issues of craft and design, might appear initially to have much in common with the Victoria and Albert, yet the approaches taken towards the display of their respective collections are quite different. It is noticeable that the Victoria and Albert prefaces its musical instrument catalogues[113] with a justification of its policy:

> ... many of the instruments in this collection have been acquired primarily on account of their fine decoration or because of the good taste and high

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[112]These were gifted from the musicologist Carl Engel in the 1870s. The folk and oriental art instruments were transferred to the Horniman Museum in 1956. New instruments have not been acquired.

[113]The Victoria and Albert Museum catalogues are:
Raymond Russell, *Catalogue of Musical Instruments, Volume I: Keyboard Instruments* (London, 1968).
Anthony Baines, *Catalogue of Musical Instruments, Volume II: Non-Keyboard Instruments* (2nd edn., London, 1978).

> degree of craftsmanship which they exhibit. Greater attention has been paid to this aspect than is usual in catalogues of musical instruments, not only because any of these instruments deserve to be regarded as works of art in their own right, but because the decorative qualities often provides evidence about the instruments which may compliment the specialised knowledge of the musicologists.[114]

The implication here is that the decorative qualities of the instrument are important in musical terms as being representative of the society that helped to develop them, and that 'design' is a direct result of changing fashions and attitudes in that society. In order to stress this, the *Catalogue* goes on to explain how other sources are drawn upon *within* the museum itself, to make profitable use of in-house expertise:

> ... the help of experts in leatherwork, costumes, handwriting and heraldry, for instance, has elucidated new facts concerning the date and provenance of specimens to an extent which musicological knowledge would have been unable to accomplish unaided.[115]

These comments would appear to herald a display policy in which the musical instruments are related to their wider social-historical sphere; a reciprocal arrangement, wherein the various departments complement each other. The Victoria and Albert's music collection is thus in a position to draw-upon these other non-musical resources, with the objective of gaining further background knowledge and understanding of the instruments. This has, however, been accomplished without explicitly incorporating either the textual information or material from these other collections, amongst the musical display. The only

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[114]Anthony Baines, *Catalogue: Non-Keyboard Instruments*, p.vii.
[115]*Ibid.*,p.x.

concession to sympathetic, related material, appears to be that the musical instruments are placed next to the 'associated' collection of 'Clocks' and above the 'Department of Costume'. This lack of cross-referencing in a museum so rich in comparable material is curious, moreso when even the General guidebook to the museum makes a point of describing how musical instrument decoration is part of a wider movement in design terms:

> As craftsmanship followed contemporary fashions of dress and interior decoration, it's fitting that these instruments are cared for by the Department of Furniture and Interior Design, and are displayed here above the Dress Collection.[116]

The museum's display policy seems to be in a dichotomy: the collection is catalogued as furniture and design, yet it is still at pains to describe the possible musical cross-currents of the adjacent 'Dress Collection'. This confusion is further borne out in the *Prefaces* given in the *Instrumental Catalogues:* for example, the introduction to the *Keyboard Catalogue* is highly detailed and chooses to emphasise the technical aspects of instrumental design rather than decorative concerns. Clearly, the priorities in collecting musical instruments has shifted over the years within the museum. The original collection, gathered together by the *musicologist* Carl Engel, was concerned with the instruments as *practical tools* rather than as art objects, whereas in the present century '... purchases have been made mainly for their decorative qualities'.[117]

The comments made in a further guidebook *Musical Instruments as Works of Art* are equally revealing, when the instruments are considered primarily as art objects:

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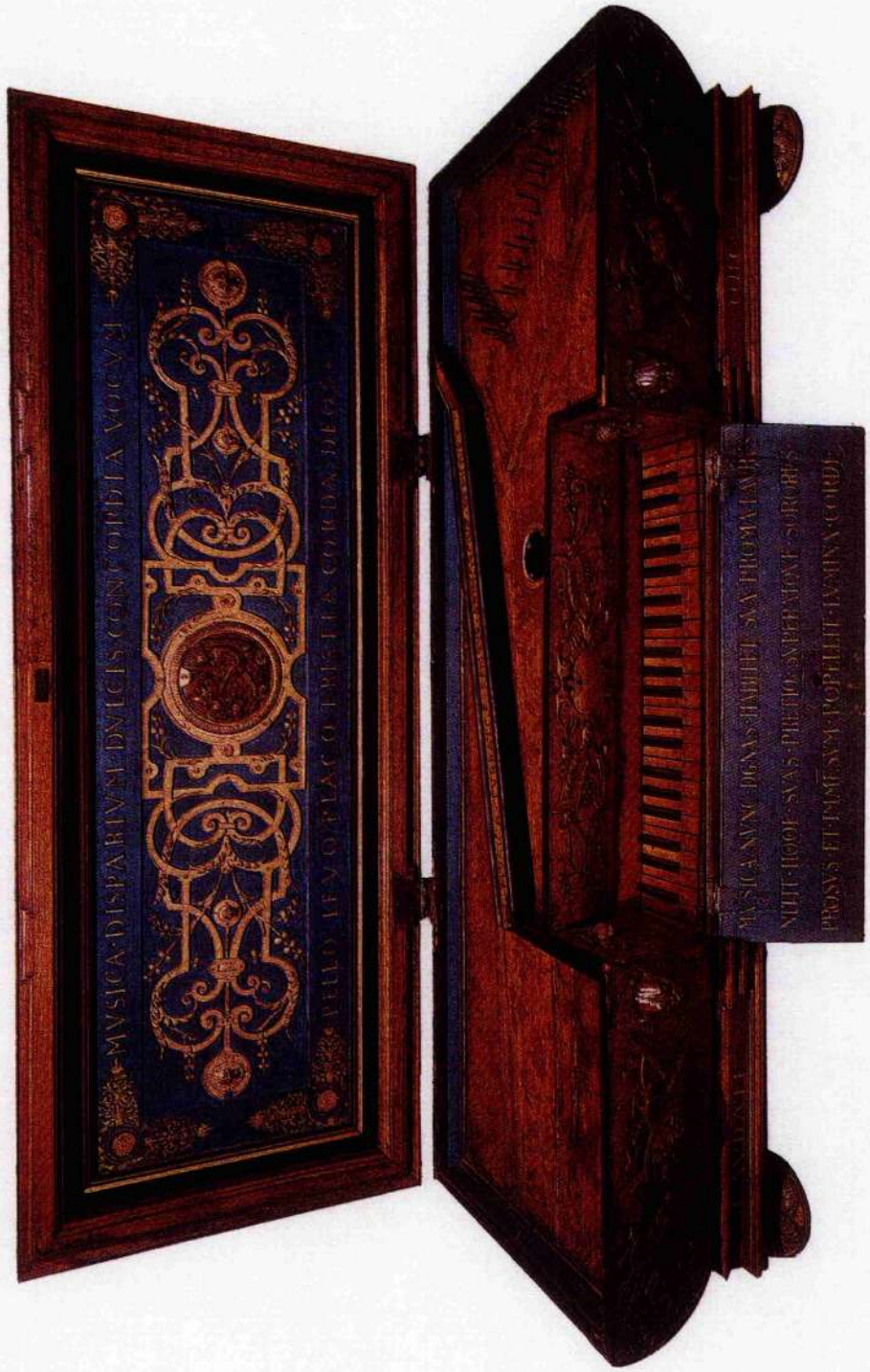
[116]*The Victoria and Albert Museum: General Guidebook to the Museum* p.40.
[117]James Yorke, *Keyboard Instruments at the Victoria and Albert Museum*(London, 1986), p. 9.



The Victoria and Albert Museum: Virginal, Flemish, 1568. Walnut case decorated with carved musical trophies; the inside of the lid features a medallion of Orpheus and the wild beasts.

(Reproduced courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the V&A.)

> Since they are themselves objects of great beauty and delicacy, they add to the glamour of objects among which they are placed and our understanding of them is in turn enhanced by their being seen in a wider context.[118]

This statement is important, for in its display, the Victoria and Albert does *not* make use of non-musical associated material, other than drawing upon it extensively for the necessary background information ascribed to the instruments in the *Catalogues*. In fact, the *Catalogues* and the actual musical exhibition sometimes appear to inhabit quite separate museological worlds, both in how they claim to and do present the collection. The *Works of Art* catalogue continues to stress how important social-historical context is as a frame of reference for the visitor, but does not carry it out in practice:

> It may be necessary for reasons of conservation to segregate ancient musical instruments in special rooms of their own, but they ought ideally to be seen amid other works of decorative art from their period.[119]

This is true, yet whether an instrument is displayed as *furniture* or as *music* in the museum, both categories could still make valid use of associated material, be it contemporary woodwork, where comparisons about design and woodworking techniques could be made, or any other cultural source that might shed light upon the musical instruments. Occasionally this does happen, (or it is at least implied); for example, reference is made to how furniture for domestic use often mirrors the wing-shaped forms favoured by English harpsichords in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A greater proportion of such information about parallel developments in the applied arts would benefit the display considerably.

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[118]Peter Thornton, *Musical Instruments as Works of Art* (The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1982), p. 2.
[119]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

Use of the Exhibition Space

Having discussed the theory behind the display, it is now possible to examine what happened in practice: what was on display and how was it interpreted?

The musical instruments are housed together as a unit in an attractive circular gallery display area, arranged so that the central cases contain the stringed instruments and the horizontal 'edges' of the space feature cabinets containing woodwind, musical boxes and clocks. In addition, there are further instruments hidden in twelve pull-out-from- the-wall cabinets; a method which has the advantage of saving space and of being conservation oriented, by exposing its contents to the light less frequently than its neighbouring static display cases. This must, however, be countered by their lack of visibility, and, for reasons which are unexplained, the barest of labelling is given to them (consisting only of name, date and place of origin), in stark contrast to the detailed information accompanying the other instruments. The rest of the collection is housed in permanent, visible display cases, including even the majority of the keyboard instruments. For instruments the size of harpsichords and pianos, this is unusual, and it does have a 'distancing' effect on the viewer who is most probably used to keyboard instruments, being the one type of instrument that it is possible to observe at close hand. However, with instruments of such antiquity and tactile decoration, cases are necessary: the environmental conditions within the case are more easily controllable and it avoids the use of prim 'Do not Touch' notices, the standby of many a keyboard curator. Finally, smaller instruments of noteworthy design (violins, guitars and so forth), are tilted to a suitable angle (by the aid of perspex supports), instead of being laid down flat, so that an all-round view of the decoration is provided and the whole of the piece easily observed.

There are no introductory texts or master labels as a preamble to the exhibition; instead each instrument (with the exception of those in the sliding wall cabinets), is given a detailed label, which, while treating the item as a piece of furniture, also considers its application as a musical instrument. A typical example takes the following sequence:

> [Name:] Baryton German c.1720
>
> [Detailed description of materials and techniques used:]
>
> Sycamore back, tortoise shell and ivory veneer finger board. The finial of the tuning head represents Orpheus and his lute. 4 strings over board. 25 sympathetic strings.
>
> [Museum Identification:] Music No. 1444 - 1870 Non-keyboard Catalogue No. 2/7.
>
> [Musical History:] Played Central Europe until 1640 - 1800. Haydn composed for it. Tuning like bass viol D G c e a d'
>
> [Maker:] Jacques Sainprae, a Huguenot refugee from France.[120]

The inclusion of technical musical details - for example, the pitch range given above - is indicative of the duel role of this collection: the material may be grouped under the premise of furniture, but the museum's concern with *design* as well as with decorative features, necessitates a technical description which *has* to include musical terminology. This being so, it would be to the visitors' advantage if the *Helmholtz* system of notating pitch (D G c e a d') was explained at some point of the exhibition; a simple illustration would suffice. Whilst the decoration of an instrument is usually self-evident, a brief synopsis relating to pitch and tuning would elucidate much of the labelling where constant reference is being made to these areas.

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[120]Anthony Baines, *Catalogue: Non-Keyboard Instruments*, p. 12.

Social History and the Music Box

In comparison with the main volume of the exhibition, the Victoria and Albert's display and interpretation of its collection of musical boxes is distinguished by its strong emphasis on social history over that of either design or decorative art concerns. Unlike the 'National Collection of Musical Instruments', this display opens with several large contextual panels, in this case focusing upon the value of 'everyday music' from the beginnings of automation, to the increased demand for mass music production. The text gives a history of mechanical music from the sixteenth-century to the end of the nineteenth (the latter the heyday of music boxes), and discusses: the social issues of home entertainment; changing tastes and attitudes about learning to play an instrument; and the initial stages of the phonograph which would eventually replace the music box.

As a piece of social history, this display was extremely informative. Perhaps this aspect was concentrated upon because, in contrast with the rest of the musical instruments, the music boxes as items of 'furniture' are not particularly interesting. However, their design and mechanism *is* of interest; it would have been helpful to have included a little more explanation regarding the way in which the metal rolls and discs involved created the sound. The display was concerned with popular entertainment for the masses and therefore would have benefited, if possible, from a chance to *hear* the instruments. In many other mechanical music museums with comparable collections, it is common either to hear the instruments demonstrated live or on recordings, (if only because these instruments were designed to be played frequently without the addition of a human performer). Without any description of the music they played, the instruments are reduced to becoming only so many wooden boxes.

The 'National Collection of Musical Instruments'

Overall, the display of musical instruments in the Victoria and Albert Museum must be judged within its limits. The museum guidebook claims that the collection provides visitors with a general historical view of musical instruments between c.1530-1880 and indeed this is the case, if it is accepted that the overview can only be a highly selective one in musical terms. 'Furniture' includes the majority of the exhibition's wooden-bodied stringed instruments; but from the remaining items there is only one brass item and no percussion instruments, which, although in keeping with the criterion of 'furniture', is not representative of brass or percussion instruments between 1530-1880. This is not to say that the Victoria and Albert Museum is, or has ever claimed to be comprehensive in terms of its musical instruments; it is not. What should be of concern is that it is the home of the 'National Collection of Musical Instruments', and that as such, the current collection under that title is not and cannot be wholly representative. A 'National Collection' has a duty to use its collections for the *widest public benefit*, not only for the specialist. National Collections of this status should also be able to act as a (musical) resource centre for other museums; and at present, its musical sphere is far too narrow to be applicable. It is further noticeable that the instruments in the collection are nearly all from a period before c.1850. The museum claims that c.1800, with the advances in manufacture and production, that many instrumental forms became stereotyped, and are therefore - for applied art - of less immediate interest and value to the museum. The one exception to this rule was said to be the piano; and this is also the case in the exhibition where several examples of pianos from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are found, in stark contrast with the chronology of the other instruments. It should be stressed, however, in spite of this rather narrow-minded reasoning, that interesting musical instruments which would still be valid in terms of decoration

and design suitable to the museum's ideology, can still be found after the 1850 cut-off point, up-to and including the present day. It should be remembered that the Great Exhibition from whence the Museum of South Kensington sprang (to become the Victoria and Albert Museum officially in 1899), was concerned with decorative art and design *in mass production.* It would be fitting if the museum would be willing to continue this precedent, in accordance with its status as the home of the 'National Music Collection', by collecting *for* the future. This is a view shared by *Museums of Music*:

> The policy and practice of the museum should be to collect a range of objects of national importance and associated archival material in its particular field. It should already have a substantial collection in relation to its stated objectives and the museum display policy should reflect the full range of its collection.[121]

As a National Collection, the Victoria and Albert Museum has an obligation to interest and inform its visitors. The difficulty with maintaining 'academic standards', however, as argued in *Museums of Music* is that it often deters attempts to broaden or popularise methods of presentation,[122] which, in the long term, are most likely to encourage visitors. The call to 'popularise' is distasteful to many curators who associate it with a theme park approach, detrimental to their collections.

For many museums, once a musical instrument collection is deemed to be of standing, the museum sees the instrument only in terms of being a valuable *object.* It is the museums with non-instrumentally based musical holdings or items of 'lesser significance' which are more inclined to interpret their collections in

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[121]*Museums of Music* p. 62.
[122]*Ibid.*, p.52-3.

innovative and dynamic ways. For example, the Museum of London has recently planned 'Music for a While: A Festival of London's Seventeenth Century Music to Celebrate the Purcell Tercentenary.'[123] This includes; a two day conference; a concert by the *Academy of Ancient Music*; a number of workshop/performances inspired by visits to the museum's galleries, 'Bring along your own trumpet or trombone to take part and see how it relates to its seventeenth century counterpart';[124] and a lesson in '300-year-old pop music', as the *Broadhouse Band* recreate the sounds of seventeenth-century London.

In this well-devised programme, the museum thus covers academic, historical, practical and social-musicological concerns, and yet the Museum of London is not itself a 'musical museum', but one with only an eclectic smattering of instruments. It is possible for it to mount a musically based enterprise, because it favours exhibitions on 'issues' or distinct historical periods in keeping with its chronological galleries and contextual use of material. It is debatable that the museum is able to adopt this approach because it is not tied down to - or defined by - a single category of material. By contrast, single-subject musical instrument collections are often stymied by the received historical usage for their type of collection.

The Aesthetic Value of the Period Room

The period room setting, whether authentic or replicated, is a method of display which best lends itself to a social-historical interpretation of the material. In this way the collection is viewed in some sort of appropriate context, aiming for an approximation of reality rather than the 'artificiality' of the glass-case display. Many museums are not in a position to adopt this style of presentation, especially

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[123]Guide: *Museum of London Events and Exhibitions, January - June 1995*, p. 5.
[124]*Ibid.*

if their material is disparate; also considerations of space and conservation do not always lend themselves to the 'luxury' of a room display setting. It is apparent that the musical collections which fall into the 'room setting' category usually belong to one of two distinct types of museum; either the 'stately home', which often already has a genuine *music room;* or in the Birthplace Museum of a musician. The former category would encompass displays from the Ranger's House, where: 'The period room is laid out to give an impression of amateur music-making in the eighteenth-century',[125] and is in keeping with a practice found in many National Trust houses; while the latter category would apply to the Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum. The advantage held by these types of museum over their 'glass-case' contemporaries, is their authenticity - even if it is sometimes little more than a veneer. It is their major selling point and is typified in the way that, for example, the National Trust and the National Trust for Scotland use it to capitalise upon the potential realism inherent in their properties:

> Music has always been part of country house life. In the early seventeenth-century Lord Dorset paid a ten piece orchestra at Knole in Kent, and a century and a half later Haydn composed a march for Sir Henry Harper of Calke Abbey. The Trust has tried to sustain this tradition and in the summer months not a week goes by when a concert, a recital or even an opera cannot be heard at one of its houses.[126]

The use of 'authentic settings' as a backdrop for concerts and recitals is an obvious one, even when the associated musical collections - if any - may in themselves not be particularly valuable or extensive; the setting itself will stimulate the visitor's interest and imagination. Contextual displays may be deployed in order to subtly change the way in which the visitor sees the collection: it is sometimes possible

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[125]Frances Palmer, *The Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments*, p. 4.
[126]Editorial, *The National Trust Magazine*, Autumn 1991, (No. 64), p. 3.

where music collections are concerned, to 'disguise' the musical content by placing the material within a wider context. This is especially desirable if the musical material is of little interest in its own right.

The Impact of Contextual Display

At this point, it might be advantageous to contrast the approaches taken between the *collective* display policy of the Victoria and Albert Museum as against the *dispersed contextual* display of the comparable Bowes Museum, Durham. At first glance, these two museums appear to have common criteria: both catalogue their musical instrument collections as furniture and are concerned with the decorative arts. However, as a country house museum, the Bowes Museum is able to disperse its musical holdings in many room settings throughout the house with the purpose of illustrating, for example, in a particular room, 'French Decorative Art c. 1850-70'.[127] This would not be possible in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The room settings in the Bowes Museum might be said to be 'ready-made', and its distribution of material a feasible option because the collection is comparatively small (eighty instruments), unlike the Victoria and Albert where the volume of instruments really requires its own display area. Nevertheless, from a social-historical perspective, these room settings are effective because they present a *whole image* rather than an item in isolation; it is often the case that visitors will retain a *visual* memory of how an exhibition looked, far longer that they would be able to recall the individual objects or text.

Unless the museum building housing a collection is itself historical and integral to the method of display, room settings and smaller tableau scenes (within a room or display case), tend to be favoured in museums with small or limited collections.

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[127]The Bowes Museum has a collection of about eighty musical instruments including, most notably, a series of early pianos c.1790-1820. See Elizabeth Conran, *The Bowes Museum Guidebook*, p.10.

The tableaux found at the Ranger's House and the use of 1930s period room displays at Gloucester Folk Museum have already been mentioned. It was apparent, (in answer to museum visits and questionnaires), that it was the museums with a social-historical outlook - and generally smaller collections - which took the most trouble to place their material in context. The display of a church organ in the 'Church and Chapel' section of the Manx National Museum was typical of this:

> The display area has been constructed to give the impression of a church or chapel interior with a ribbed, vaulted ceiling, part of a pulpit and a pew. Previously the church organ had been on display as a free-standing exhibit with a single explanatory label. Its new position in a contextual display setting rather than as an 'isolated folk by-gone' will hopefully enhance visitors' appreciation of the instrument.[128]

In this way the instrument is given an extra dimension instead of becoming an 'isolated folk by-gone'. The difficulty with presenting musical instruments *out* of context, or as decorative art pieces alone, is not that they cannot be appreciated in their own right, but that without clarification, they can lose their identity and value for the visitor. If a small music collection or single piece is shown in a room display without *accompanying information*, then it is still of limited interest, regardless of its contextualisation.

> They [a small instrumental collection] have been shown because they are pretty things in a room of other pretty things; coins, stamps, pewter etc.[129]

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[128]Letter from Miss Y.M. Cresswell, Assistant Keeper of Social History, Manx National Museum, (31. 10. 91).
[129]Letter from Jonathan Carter, Curator of Social History, Jersey Museums, (2. 12. 91).

Such an attitude is understandable if the music collection is wide ranging and concerned only with decoration, but is not a valid perspective when the criterion is one of social history.

The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum

The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum is the ultimate example of the room setting method of display devoted to a musical subject. The display avoids glass cases and rope barriers; the aim is to make the house look as if it is still lived in by the composer. In one respect this is a misconception, for although Gustav Holst was born in this house in 1874, only the first seven years of his life were spent here; he did not live and work here in later life as the layout of his personal belongings and compositions might suggest. Nonetheless, technically the description of 'Birthplace Museum' *is* correct; and it can be considered an appropriate backdrop for a presentation of the Holst collection, in spite of its questionable realism.[130] Here, the room setting approach is particularly effective; it allows a wide distribution of often very ordinary items which would lose much of their interest if divorced from their room context. The atmosphere of *genuine* objects in *authentic* surroundings cannot be undervalued: the attraction of realism and of 'being there' is of great importance to visitors; an obvious fact if the number of Birthplace Museums or places associated with individuals is considered.[131] Most people are insatiably curious about how other people - especially famous people - lived, and for them a room display is a more immediate and friendly image than the glass-case style of presentation. In the Holst Museum - concerned with an

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[130]The Holst Birthplace Museum is in fact only contained in the ground floor rooms. The rest of the house is given over to a series of 'period rooms' depicting Regency and Victorian life, including a 'working' Victorian kitchen and scullery. Personal items belonging to the Holst family (paintings, china etc.) are also found dispersed throughout these period rooms in addition to the main Holst exhibition rooms.

[131]One hundred and fifty such examples may be found in the *Cambridge Guide to the Museums of Britain and Ireland*, ed. Kenneth Hudson & Ann Nicholls (Revised edn. CUP, 1989), p. 452.

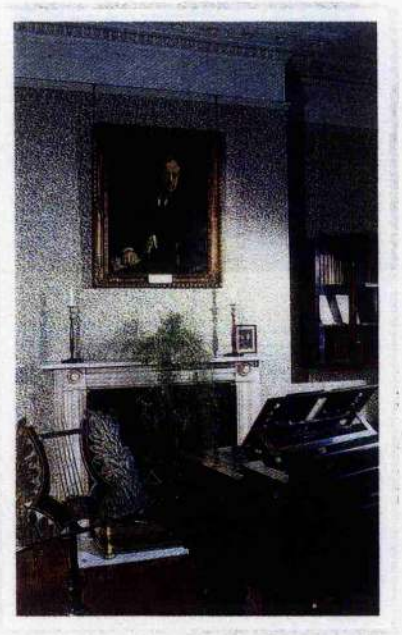
individual's life and work - a room setting is an entirely suitable method for display: at its simplest level, visitors relate to this because they too live in houses not museums, and so many of the personal and household objects are familiar to them. The very 'ordinariness' of the room display helps to humanise the material and to make Holst the musician an accessible figure.

A Biographical Museum: The Display and Interpretation of the Collection

The Holst collection, which is quite small, is contained in the two ground floor rooms of the house. It has been laid out to look as 'natural' as possible; and succeeds in doing so in that the visitor is free to walk about the rooms; there is little free-standing furniture to get in the way and smaller items (photographs, letters) are neatly displayed in wall cases lining the rooms. The museum has published a very good pamphlet-guide relating Holst's life and works, therefore the labelling within this 'authentic' setting is kept to a minimum, with the exception of the more detailed labels accompanying material in the wall cases. In this manner, the interior contents of the room are left mostly untouched. Where labelling *did* occur, the information given was usually personal and of an anecdotal nature: sympathetic labelling is required for this type of collection where the greater part of the items are of value through association rather than intrinsic worth. Thus, the visitor learns that Holst always kept a particular reproduction engraving of Mozart by his piano and that the piano itself is:

> Grand Piano made by Collard and Collard c. 1850 which belonged to G.H.; he bought it second hand in 1913 for £12. He chose this particular instrument for its light touch because throughout his life he suffered from neuritis in his right arm.[132]

[132]Display label, The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum.



Exhibition area of *The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum.*

(Reproduced courtesy of *Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums.*)

The exhibition is divided between two rooms, so that the front room (dominated by the piano and a large oil portrait of Holst), contains items relating to his life as a composer, his compositions in the form of manuscripts and scores; while the second adjoining room contains a chronological selection of material illustrating both his personal and working life. Here, photographs, concert programmes, documents and other memorabilia are set out with captions in the wall cases - a cornucopia of assorted material. It is interesting to imagine what the effect would be, if these cases were to be transported to a more objective 'museum' environment. The result would almost certainly be less appealing: it is the atmosphere of the house and its room settings which give these items their relevance and magic. In this setting it is possible for the visitor to absorb something of Holst's character through the material on display. These items need not necessarily be musical ones for them to shed light on a musical life. For example, a collection of the composer's personal books shelved behind the piano included the following telling titles: Hector Berlioz's *Treatise on Modern Instrumentation*; Holst's friend Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *What is a Horoscope?*, perhaps a prophesy for *The Planets* ?

Despite the Holst collection being small, some of its material has arguably only obscure or distant links with the composer. 'His cousin's blue enamel watch',[133] might be thought to be a tenuous exhibit. However, it is often with the 'insignificant' throw-away items that the display comes to life within the confines of these two rooms. The faded brown label on which Holst had written 'Early Horrors' and stuck it upon the box containing his youthful compositions while studying under Sir Charles Stanford, and the numerous family snapshots of the composer with his friend Vaughan Williams on walking holidays, could only really work in a sympathetically warm environment.

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[133] *Ibid.*

In general, the displays concerned with the personal working life of the composer were more successful than those dealing with his musical development; the latter is obviously more complex to interpret within the limited space available in a museum environment that is essentially biographical rather than musicological. Lengthy technical analysis of Holst's work would be out of place here. Although copies of his manuscripts are present (lining the walls in their glass cases), the details they give are restricted to a musical minimum. A typical example would be:

> *The Perfect Fool*
>
> Performed at Covent Garden in 1923.

Clearly, the manuscripts here are used to provide 'colour' rather than analytical detail. The sole exception to this method of presentation is that the domineering rhythmic motif of 'Mars' (in 5/4 time) from *The Planets* is quoted during a brief commentary on that movement, described as being 'the Dominant Pedal on G'. This is the only example of a technical comment in the entire exhibition, included because this motif from *The Planets* is probably the best known musical 'thumbprint' of all Holst's compositions.

The museum appeared to make up for its relatively limited collection of personal Holst material by using the musical scores of his works throughout the display as a sort of atmospheric 'padding'. This was employed in a number of different ways: aside from those scores found in the wall displays, there were also modern editions lying unopened in glass-top table cases. No other information was provided apart from the obvious title on the book's cover; they appeared to be included merely because they bore the name of 'Holst' upon them. However, this dull treatment of material was off-set by the number of autograph work copies,

scores and books describing Holst's life and works dispersed in an *ad lib* fashion about the house, so that visitors could pick up a book and 'browse'. In this way, the lack of technical information about the music might well be rectified for the interested visitor by simply sitting in one of the seats provided (visitors were invited to seat themselves in the room containing the archive material), and looking-up the facts for himself. These casually placed piles of books and available seating were quite in keeping with the informal atmosphere of the display. Perhaps the current nostalgia for this 'time capsule' style of museum in the face of so much hi-tech museum development, may account in part for its success. Fortunately, the Holst Birthplace Museum is sensitive enough to allow visitors to indulge their curiosity quietly in these realistic surroundings. It would, theoretically, also be possible to imagine it with a synthetic fire in the old Victorian grate and *The Planets* booming out from loudspeakers around the house: paradoxically, it is easy for genuine period museum settings to fall into the trap of becoming artificial in an effort to become even more 'realistic'. The Holst Museum though, is prepared to accept its material collections as they stand, and is content to interpret them within the limits of their setting. This works because the house setting is as much a part of the display as the Holst memorabilia itself.[134]

Conclusion

From the studies above, it is clear that musical instruments as *objects* are presented in well defined categories, but can also be interpreted in predictable and often stereotyped ways. The vogue for applying new methodologies to literature, film and the visual arts in general has not been applied to music.

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[134]In dealing with the presentation of an individual personality, the Holst Museum would be suited to a full-time guide in addition to the occasional special lectures given at present. To compare it with a composer and museum of similar stature - The Edvard Grieg Museum at Troldhaugen, Norway, benefits from a personal guide who is able to relate Grieg's works to the Scandinavian area and illustrate his talk with extracts of Grieg's own early recordings. A 'Memorial Room' contains pictures, memorabilia and anecdotes about the composer's life and works. In 1992 the museum attracted 130,000 visitors; (the Holst Museum 7,000, the Elgar Birthplace Museum 9,000).

> Briefly stated, the discipline of music theory and musicology are grounded in the assumption of musical autonomy. They continuously keep separate considerations of biography, patronage, place and dates from those of musical syntax and structure.[135]

In essence, this is also true of music museums, where the material of the subject *music* has been splintered into easily handled segments of interest. This is most apparent in the rift between music as *object* (instrument) and music as *creation* (performance and sound). If the non-visual aspects of music are thought of as evasive, then museums have compensated for this by taking an even firmer hold of music as *physical objects*. It is understandable that museums must have material evidence of the subject they are presenting, but this should not be at the expense of the subject's non-visual attributes and applications.

In many ways, the *object* is the enemy of the musical collection: displaying musical subjects only in terms of objects negates all the vital and imaginative aspects of music. Musical instruments are, after all, a means to an end - that of producing musical sound - and music itself is not just about sound but also history and society, individuals and ideas. A display about people without objects is as meaningless as a display about objects without people, yet this is frequently the case in instrumental collections. What is special about museums is their material culture - but we need to explain what makes it special. Instruments and scores exist to function in conjunction with composers, performers, patrons and listeners, but above all, it is the *listeners* who provide the greatest part of musical interaction, and the largest number of museum visitors.

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[135]See 'Introduction', *Music and Society: the Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert & Susan McClary.

With music it is necessary for the museums - and the curators - to be made aware that there is life outside of the object. Material culture, displayed without its associated people and ideas, will not attract visitors. Human nature is selfish regarding material culture unless it is of direct relevance to us: 'I play the violin', 'I'm a fan of rock music'; and the situation is further exacerbated by the pre-conceived ideas many individuals hold about 'anaemic' museum exhibitions. The taxonomic display of the Edinburgh University type may be superb in academic terms but it has little to offer the unqualified visitor about musical instruments, other than sheer quantity. Where musical subjects are involved, the material collection is really only as good as its interpretation: increasingly, museums are moving away from the traditional policy of putting everything on show, to favour instead a selective display - items chosen to illustrate a specific theme or because of their individual significance. Theoretically, an empty gallery could contain only five unimportant items, yet most of its visitors would look at these items far more carefully than they would a crowded gallery of important pieces. Isolating objects, or having fewer exhibits, can make the material *appear* to be special: isolated pieces draw the visitor's attention and having fewer items encourages *looking* rather than visual skimming. Obviously, this approach is not suited to extensive taxonomic collections; such object-rich displays will always have to work harder to maintain the attention of the non-specialist visitor, but it is likely that this could be achieved through encouraging socially-historically aware interpretation.

Finally, to take the argument a stage further, would such a new-found focus on *people* and ideas mean that the objects themselves would become redundant? Is the curator of an academic museum collection ever going to be able to approach his 'objects' in the same way as a curator of an eclectic or social-historical collection? Stuart Davies has made the following salient points:

> Are museums, then, really only about objects? The important word in this question is 'only'. Few would argue that museums should not focus on artefacts and works of art ... While there is some merit in concentrating on a narrow range of activities, reliance on one function may be unwise. The commitment to education in its broadest sense, already recognises the role of the museum goes far beyond that of guardianship... Museums and art galleries must have social purpose. To be simply the guardian of, and researcher into material culture will not command respect in the twenty-first century.[136]

Davies continues to argue that museums should add value to society through their activities, inspired by the object and not enslaved to it. For a museum to now be just a repository for the past - for the sake of objects - is no longer enough, however well the objects are displayed.

> The debate over people and objects may conceal the important fact that the two aspects together can give museums a wider social purpose and define more explicitly what contributions museums are making to society.[137]

Music museums, of necessity, now have the opportunity to move into new areas of interpretation aside from the object-based approach. The object will still be of central importance, but its role will be active rather than passive, in keeping with the intrinsic nature of musical material, and fundamental to this will be the attitude taken towards musical sound.

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[136]Stuart Davies 'Should a museum be driven by objects or people?', *The Museums Journal* (September 1994), p. 21.
[137]*Ibid., p.* 22.

CHAPTER 4

SOUND AND SILENCE: THE PERCEPTIONS AND USE OF MUSICAL SOUND IN MUSICOLOGICAL DISPLAY

When most people think of 'music', they do not think of instruments or composers but of musical *sound.* The Western world is peopled by *listeners* ; never before have we had the opportunity to listen to so much music and of such diversity; and as people are sound-conscious in their everyday lives, it is implied that this should be carried over into museums dealing with musical subjects. This places music museums in an insidious position, for their collections - by their very nature - are based on *objects* not aural collections. This is not to belittle purely instrumental or manuscript collections as being merely the physical trappings of music, but it is important to remember that these collections of instruments, scores and biographical material once existed in order to create music as *sound.*

While Chapter Three examined how the musical object is usually interpreted, this chapter is concerned with the various attitudes, and subsequent approaches, taken by the different museums towards displaying what is essentially a non-visual art subject. The use of sound may be divided into two types: pre-recorded music (background music, audio headsets etc.), and live music (demonstrations, concerts), while sound archives constitute a special category and are discussed accordingly.

The Benefits of Sound

Museums are only beginning to exploit the potential of music-based collections. The general use of music in more general museum displays is a frequent occurrence, but when the subject of display is *itself* a musical one, then the attitude

taken towards it and the subsequent deployment of 'music' in the display is telling. With *any* musical subject, sound is implicit in the subject matter. The musical interpretation of this non-visual aspect takes two distinct forms: sound used in connection with *object-based* (usually instrumental) displays; and sound in its own right - sound archives. Music used in object-based displays is intended to either be *illustrative* (of an instrument, a composer's work), or *emotive* (creating an atmosphere as a background to an exhibition); whichever, it is rarely used impartially.

It is apparent that music has no real sense until it is made audible: musical *scores* are for musicians. Also, music is never constant - no two performances are ever the same;[138] and as the performance of a play is shaped by the era in which it is performed, its actors and director, so music is shaped by its own set of protagonists. Both are examples of a creative process, but because the music is an *aural* not a *visual* process, it is difficult to describe; and certainly, at present, there is little sense of the 'creative process' in our museums, which are still overshadowed by the instrumental object *as* object, above all else. Facilitating some type of access to the sound and music of a collection is the most obvious way to rectify this: the best way to show the difference between, for example, the contemporary and period 'authentic' performance of J.S.Bach is to *hear* it. A *description* of gut versus metal strings, bowing technique and use of vibrato may be precise, but it does not convey the contrasts as succinctly as does an *aural* illustration, moreso when explaining the differences to an unaccustomed ear.

It is practically impossible to expose museum visitors to music without eliciting some sort of response. Most people, especially in Western cultures, are conditioned into accepting music around them as an everyday part of existence;

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[138]The great exception to this is recorded music. People conditioned into hearing always the same performance of a piece of music - through recordings - are often forgetful of, and surprised by, other interpretations.

and though we may like to believe that we are indifferent to it, music affects us in many ways.[139] When music is introduced into a scenario, it is used for a purpose: most commonly, this is to stimulate an emotional response or to create an atmosphere. People are attracted by *action* and this can be aural as well as visual; one catches the ear, the other the eye. In this respect, sound is perhaps best described as being 'invisible movement', while a visual activity like film, by contrast, is 'visible movement'. The idea that museum objects can be interpreted in their *active* role has tremendous potential for use in museum displays. It is unfortunate (and sometimes unjust) that the more academic music museums have a reputation for being static and silent places, while by contrast, in the populist end of the musical spectrum, an ingenious and sympathetic use of sound is not only the expected norm, but provides the *raison d'être* for the collection and often the principal attraction of the visit.[140] The development of musical sound in museums is diverse, even idiosyncratic in type as it is in function; what is certain is that where music *is* found in museums, visitors will usually choose to listen to it and will make their own personal response.

Background Music

The Royal Museum of Truro exhibition 'The Age of Mozart' used music in the most common and easily available way: pre-recorded tapes playing throughout the exhibition area simply as background music to the display. This is the most direct way that music may be used in an exhibition; and significantly, there were more complimentary comments in the 'Visitors' Book' about the inclusion of this background music in the Mozart exhibition, than about any other part of the exhibition, or any of the museum's other displays throughout the summer period

[139]The increasingly successful and prominent use of music to create or encourage specific reactions may be seen in activities as diverse as supermarket 'Muzak' and 'Music Therapy'.
[140]Mechanical music museums are the most obvious example of this.

of 1991. Several writers commented upon the 'novelty' aspect of hearing music in a museum.[141] It is also likely that this was successful because the music was Mozart's, which, by its musical nature when used as 'aural wallpaper', has the ability to seep into its surroundings, rather than demand to be listened to, in comparison with many other styles of music. The difficulty with using background music is that it creates a subjective response in its listeners, (especially if the reaction is an unfavourable one); and literally one man's music may be another's poison. However, in the example of this exhibition, Truro Museum could justify their use of live music on two counts: firstly, the majority of visitors would come to the exhibition because they already knew and liked Mozart's music; and secondly, because Mozart's music is perceived as being a 'safe', almost 'neutral' music, which can only, in theory, create a pleasant environment. The anniversary-sharing Prokofiev would have been an altogether different proposition.[142] Certainly, it was true that the music helped to create a pleasant, sympathetic atmosphere in the exhibition area, and that the choice of well-known works[143] (*Eine Kleine Nachtsmusik,* Symphonies 40 and 41, the 'Clarinet Concerto'), appealed to the visitors. In the Mozart exhibition this helped to conjure a feeling of musical familiarity and therefore musical *security*; indeed, many visitors were heard to be humming along quietly to the music.

Where background music fails, from the perspective of the visitor, is that it is not an optional experience. For some people music has an intrusive effect both on their level of concentration and their response to an exhibition. Where music is played it is virtually impossible to remain neutral in response, and here, even the undemanding 'aural wallpaper' approach can become insidious: many people

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[141]It is not usually the Royal Museum of Truro's policy to include background music to its displays.

[142]Sergei Prokofiev, 1891-1953.

[143]Interestingly, classical background music is practically always orchestral rather than vocal. 'Aural wallpaper' seems more suited to classical music; vocal music tends to be distracting because of the inclusion of the human voice. The case with pop music is the opposite because it is overwhelmingly vocal.

believe that we should listen to music properly or not at all. The background music argument is therefore one of 'atmosphere' versus 'disturbance'. For example, in a small museum or exhibition area there is inevitably a leakage of sound into other parts of the building, and the response of staff working in an environment of constant musical outpouring and repetition must be considered. In the Truro Museum exhibition, the primary purpose of the background music was not to provide visitors with something to analyse or listen to in great detail, but simply to compliment the material on display in an *aesthetic* sense. In this case, it worked well, mainly because the exhibition was small and not congested by large numbers of visitors; by comparison, background music in the larger and more crowded British Library 'Mozart' exhibition might have resulted in an 'aural claustrophobia' of swarming crowds and incessant noise. It is clear that the nature of the museum site and building plays an important part in the successful deployment of background music; most museums would concur that if there is any doubt about the inclusion of background music, then it is wisest to leave the display in silence.

Optional Pre-Recorded Music

The British Library exhibition 'Mozart: Prodigy of Nature' drew, in the main, from its collection of autograph and manuscript scores, to provide the focus for the exhibition. The display included a substantial number of audio-headsets built into the display cases, the implication being that, although the manuscripts were the *reason* for the display, it was also important to be able to *listen* to them. Written music, as the physical representation of sound, is not and cannot, (even for the musician), ever be as immediate as hearing the sound. For most people who do not read music, the printed musical page has little relevance aside from its picturesque qualities. Even for those who recognise the musical figures written

down before them, this still lacks the *substance* of actually hearing what it sounds like: it is like the difference between seeing a flower and being able to smell it.

Audio-headphone sets of this type, although expensive items, are one of the best methods of including music in a museum display with a minimum of fuss and distraction. The use of background music in a large, busy national museum such as this, would have become an irritation and, because of this, have lost its musical impact. Instead, the headphones offered the visitor a choice of whether or not to listen; to the pieces they wanted to hear, and for as long or short a time as wished. As a facility, it was extremely popular: if there are headsets available then people will use them, if only out of curiosity to find out what they might contain. In this case, the British Library chose to represent (in a chronological display), different works written throughout Mozart's career, taken from as many musical genres as possible: operatic, piano, orchestral and chamber music. The selection of this music was not arbitrary, but always chosen to illustrate - through sound - an appropriate part of the display: thus, while the visitor viewed an early square piano he could listen to a performance on an instrument of the same type, sometimes with even a musical extract from the very manuscript laid before him.

The 'Walkman' Guided Tour

The above two examples of using pre-recorded material favoured musical soundtracks alone. The pre-recorded tape found at the Horniman Museum [144]combined this with a narrative commentary about its instrumental collection. This guide was available for hire in the form of a 'Walkman' with pre-recorded tape, to be carried by the visitor on his journey around the collection.[145]

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[144]This commentary was used for the museum's 'Walkman Tour' of the music collection prior to the introduction of the new 'Music Gallery' in October 1994.
[145]The Royal College of Music's collection - around 500 instruments - also plans to introduce Walkman tours, (1994).

The advantage of this system to museums is its relative cheapness (once the Walkman machines have been purchased and a master tape made) in comparison with the expensiveness of other highly technical built-in audio equipment. Walkmans are easily operated, portable, and have a 'fun' element which is especially attractive to children; nor, (at a normal volume) do they disturb other visitors and they have the advantage that they are controlled by the *visitor* not the museum - if he wishes to stop the tape, rewind it, or pause, then this is possible. In this way the visitor may travel through the exhibition at his own pace.[146]

The Horniman Museum has always placed a great emphasis on education through explanation. Sound is a vital part of this, a belief echoed in the informative style of their Walkman tape where, in order to appreciate an instrument, the ability to hear what it sounds like, is taken to be a prerequisite. The commentary opens with an explanation of how the Horniman Museum came to be established, and of how the cataloguing system works with regard to the instrumental collections. It then proceeds to take the visitor on a conducted tour of the collection, either by commenting upon an instrument and then illustrating this by a 'sound' example, or, alternatively, by playing the instrument as a 'sound' background during the commentary. This should happen -in theory - just as the visitor is looking at the particular instrument in question, so that immediately there is a degree of sound-visual recognition. This is perhaps especially necessary when dealing with non-Western instruments, which are more likely to be unfamiliar to the visitor. Usually, the narrative will start to explain a designated case of instruments by

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[146]Another sound system which allows wandering visitors to travel at their own pace and hear examples of instruments as they are being looked at, is the Induction Loop System. This has been established at the Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford. Though more professional in tone, it is, however, a much more expensive system to introduce and maintain than its Walkman cousin. Nonetheless, pre-recorded audio systems are becoming increasingly common in all types of museum. A further system which would adapt itself well to a large collection of musical instruments is the solid-state hand-held wand: visitors enter numbers from the display panels in the exhibition onto the wand's keypad to hear an item-specific commentary. This is used, for example, in the Victoria and Albert Museum's new 'Glass Gallery'. *The Museums Journal* (September 1994), p.35.

beginning with any of the more *familiar* instruments as a point of reference for the visitor, before relating these to its obscurer companions. In this manner, for example, the visitor would move from looking at a violin to a series of 'violin-derived' bowed instruments, including kits, spike fiddles and a Mongolian *morin khorr*. Many different aspects of music were touched upon in the tape's commentary to provide a comprehensive understanding: the design and shape of the zither was traced back through the auto-harp and the harpsichord; the basic physics of music were introduced in a discussion of the aeolian harp; and the way in which the cavity of the human mouth can be used as a resonating chamber was demonstrated by a Jew's harp. In conjunction with these musicological details, anthropological cross-references were also given to introduce aspects of the instruments' social history: for example, a display of drums was discussed in terms of materials, resonance, percussive-rhythmic qualities and their associations with spirituality in the history of many countries. The commentary on this tape was fascinating in its own right; but it was in *combination* with the musical demonstrations that the instruments were brought to life. Used in this manner, sound became an invaluable and integral asset, complementing the display through the visitor's increased understanding.[147]

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[147]The Horniman Museum's new 'Music Gallery' still educates through commentary and musical example, but by a 'hands-on' approach of audio-visual technology. Understanding a musical instrument and appreciating music making is still best taught by *listening* . This is the principle behind the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien, Austria, where its newly displayed galleries use computer and audio-visual facilities to show the sound of different historical periods (Renaissance harmony, the *concertante* of the eighteenth-century, nineteenth-century tonality). To demonstrate instrumental history and tone colour, examples are played from music featuring large and small ensembles, using recordings of similar instruments. An oscilloscope's sine wave is used to show the variations in tone colour between a clavichord, a virginal and a synthesiser, while a sonograph shows the 'colours' of sound (the harmonics) by allowing the visitor to compare a Baroque violin and an old piano, flute, and trumpet with modern ones. A modern clavichord copy and a synthesiser are also able to be played by visitors. (Paper given by Dr Gerhard Stradner, *The Re-opening of the Ancient Musical Instrument Galleries at the Kunsthistorisches Museum*, CIMCIM, Edinburgh, 6.6.94.)

The Dilemma of Live Demonstrations

In contrast with the *pre-recorded* guided tour of the collection given at the Horniman Museum, is the *live* guided tour as found at the Magnificent Music Machines. Mechanical music machines, by virtue of their comparative musical youth and the fact that they produce music by artificial means, are usually considered as a separate category among museum music collections. Indeed, in museums of this type it is *expected* that the instruments will be demonstrated; and it is this which sets them apart from any of the other collections examined here. Certainly, most musical museum visitors would agree that there is no substitute for actually seeing and hearing an instrument - mechanical or otherwise - being played *live*, in order to better understand and appreciate it. There are many valid reasons why such an approach is rarely feasible in the historic and academic collections, and comparisons between mechanical and historical collections are problematic because the collections are viewed in quite different ways. In time, however, the considerations museums now apply to their historical collections, will become increasingly relevant for the younger mechanical collections.

At the present time, most mechanical music collections *do* play their instruments. The benefits this has for the visitors are obvious, indeed, *in theory* - if not in practice - their arguments could be applied to all instrumental collections:

> We believe the advantage of demonstrating the instrument to be that visitors can understand the attraction of these items to their original owners; can appreciate their quality and effectiveness and enjoy the entertainment they offer. We have found that very few people have any

> understanding of the importance of these instruments when they were new, how they were used, and who listened to them.[148]

The guided tour-demonstration of the Magnificent Music Machines was well-suited to this small thematic collection, combining a musical social history of the individual instruments with the technical information of how they worked. Each instrument in the collection was played (in chronology, dating from 1906 to 1940), so that the relationship of one to the other could be gauged, not just in terms of technological advance, but also in terms of what music was being played: an evolution from Edwardian light opera and music-hall ditties to Rakhmaninov for the *Player-Piano* and jazz for the Cafe Organs. On several of the larger instruments, their 'backs' had been removed, so that as the instrument was played it was possible to watch the mechanism at work; a far more stimulating account than any series of diagrams or verbal explanation could provide. Watching the 'Wurlitzer Theatre Organ' being played before you, as the performer-guide demonstrated its musical range and use of 'about a thousand' special sound effects, was also far more dynamic than a recording would have been: it completely held the visitors' interest.

In the academic world, the demonstration of musical instruments is an ideal that few musical collections can either aspire to or would wish to follow, if allowed. Paramount among the problems with live demonstration is the minefield of conservation issues. Indeed, this subject has become a key area of musicological debate; and it is especially important, in this context, because it influences policies and ideas regarding access to the *aural* potential of musical instruments. In the case of mechanical music museums, the majority of these have been established by private, independent, or specialist collectors who may feel less tied

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[148]Letter from Clive Jones, The Mechanical Music and Doll Collection, Chichester, (16. 11. 91).

A guide-demonstration at *The Mechanical Music and Doll Collection.*

(Reproduced courtesy of The Mechanical Music and Doll Collection.)

to the policies of conservation found in the classical and historical instrument museums.[149] The strain on the instrument brought about by continuous performance, and the maintenance necessary to keep the instrument at a high performing standard, must be weighed against the public's enjoyment and understanding of the instrument through its demonstration. With mechanical musical instruments it is common that initially these items are found in a poor state of repair, requiring highly specialised re-building, which raises a moral question regarding the purpose of the instrument: should it be left untouched, be repaired, or brought back to a modern performance standard, which might well mean using modern components, destroying historical evidence in the process? If this is done, in one sense, the instrument now ceases to be 'authentic' in the strict meaning of the word, although, in general, mechanical instruments (which are not so much sought after for academic interest), are less concerned with technical authenticity, than with the excitement of making them playable again.[150]

The *Museums of Music* 'Recommendations' are keen to point out the difference between conservation and restoration of a musical instrument.[151] Musical instruments find themselves in a specialist category, for restoration means not just changes to the *physical* body of the instrument, but also to its inherent acoustical properties and sound: 'The restorer thus contributes to reducing the historical,

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[149]The most blatant example of this I have encountered was at the Bellm Cars and Music of Yesterday Museum, Sarasota, Florida. The musical section is made up of over two thousand mechanical musical instruments, collected over a twenty-five year period by a private enthusiast. During a half-hour guided tour of the collection (none of which is labelled), selected instruments are demonstrated, including a *Player-Piano*, 1890s Edison wax cylinders, a Hurdy-gurdy and a piece of delicate Victorian automota. When queried about the ethics of playing these instruments, no qualms were expressed. Instead, relying on the sheer volume of material available, the guide assured me that 'We have plenty more', backed-up by the facility of in-house restorers/conservators.

[150]CIMCIM is working on a *Code of Ethics for Conservation*, with the eventual aim of producing a 'World Heritage List' of all unrestored instruments. It will provide guidelines for non-specialist curators and educate through workshops, conferences and publications. (Information provided by CIMCIM's Working *Group on Conservation*, Edinburgh 7.6.94.)

[151]For a detailed discussion of conservation ethics see *Museums of Music*, pp.23-33.

musical and monetary value of musical instrument collections on a large scale.'[152] The vehemence with which the 'Recommendations' reinforce the policy of non-restoration, has perhaps been influenced by the overly-frequent and sometimes negligent restoration policies of previous years. It is estimated that of four thousand stringed early keyboard instruments in the United Kingdom, only about forty are in 'original condition'.[153] Nevertheless, if museums wish to cement a non-restoring and non-playing policy, then they have a duty to explain this to, and educate, the museum visiting public, moreso when:

> What makes the issue of playing policy particularly emotive is that the public are well aware that many old instruments, such as sixteenth and seventeenth century Cremonese school violins are still being used by performers....The misapprehension that an instrument inevitably improves with age and playing is widespread....[154]

The illusion of being able to preserve an instrument forever in 'musical amber' is a common fallacy; but, as Helene La Rue has pointed out, 'You don't expect your eighty year old granny to sing like she did when she was eighteen',[155] so why should it be expected of instruments?

However, the argument in favour of demonstration is equally strong: soundless, it is unlikely that, for example, mechanical instruments, would attract the same number of visitors they do at present, enticed by the potent mixture of novelty, entertainment and often the nostalgia of hearing such instruments played. As the early representatives of mass popular entertainment and modern pre-recorded

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[152]Friedemann Hellwig, 'The Conservation of Musical Instruments: A Critical Analysis of the Position and Tasks in the Museum' *CIMCIM Publications* (No.2, 1994), p.14.
[153]*Ibid* , p.25.
[154]*Ibid* , p.28.
[155]Helene La Rue, 'The Bate Collection', *Oxford Today*, p.22.

music, many curators believe that it is in keeping with past traditions for mechanical music instruments still to be played. Certainly, these instruments were designed for the rigours of heavy-duty performance; reduced to silence, they become large 'white elephants' in musical terms, and it is only when they are played that they truly come to life. Most mechanical music collections work on this principle:

> The Museum was founded with the intention that the instruments must be heard as well as seen. There is *no* point in looking at a musical instrument! Why not cover-up all the pictures in the National Gallery and then invite people to listen to them? The analogy is exactly the same. If there is a disadvantage it is simply that the instruments have to be kept in full working order with replacement of wearing parts which are designed to be replaced anyway.[156]

The Magnificent Music Machines is a specialist museum. The live demonstrations are possible here because the collection is small, thematic and mechanical, rather than 'academic' in nature. It was created with the intention of being a vehicle for demonstration, and the instruments all fit this criteria. By contrast, academic collections are usually too vast and disparate for systematic demonstration; and the conservation problems too restrictive for it to be applicable.

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[156]Letter from Richard Cole, Curator of The Musical Museum, Brentford, (18.11.91). This mechanical music museum has continuous demonstrations, as well as a series of concert programmes. It is, nonetheless, aware of present conservation issues and has, for example, the intention of introducing a computerised system to replace the original paper-rolls used in its reproducing pianos.

Conservation

The move to conserve musical instruments began in earnest in the 1960s out of '...respect of the physical, historical and aesthetical integrity'[157] of cultural property. The ideals behind this movement are all well founded, but unfortunately, in application, they have helped to solidify the idea of the musical instrument as *silent objects,* to the neglect of its aural and 'aesthetical integrity'. Non-restoration ought not to mean stagnation of the instrument's intrinsic musicality. As Martin Elste opines:

> The fundamental problem lies in the opinion that the 'original instrument' should be more than the basis for the reconstruction of a historically correct performance, and it lies in the fact that this opinion does not take into account that the musical instrument is no more than the concrete relic of an anthropological system with socio-cultural components. That object which we traditionally call a 'musical instrument' and look at as such in a museum is mere matter with a certain material value and a certain market value. It is in itself not a document of a vanished musical culture. Only in co-ordination with the musician does it become an anthropological system.[158]

It is true to say that musical instruments are not simply objects in themselves - as they are usually portrayed - but *tools* which come to life when the 'mutual relations between musical instruments and man'[159] are shown. Elste continues:

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[157]Friedemann Hellwig, 'The Conservation of Musical Instruments 'CIMCIM Publications(1994, No.2), p.17.
[158]Martin Elste, 'Reflections on the "Authenticity" of Musical Instruments', CIMCIM *Publications* (No. 3, 1994), p.6.
[159]*Ibid.*,p.6.

> A museum of musical instruments is much more than a gallery of beautiful objects of art. It is always the attempt to *visualise the dynamics of history*. Historical instruments in their original state are part of this history as well as transformed instruments, reproductions, true copies, and even counterfeits.[160]

Elste is correct to re-focus the attention back onto instruments in *all* their manifestations. As he points out, the nature of the instrument - whether 'real', copied or restored is really not as important as understanding and interpreting it in a truly *musical* way. Museum collections are in danger of becoming obsessed with 'authenticity' to such an extent, that they no longer hear what the instruments have to say for themselves - restored or otherwise. Indeed, in some instances, the *ancient* restoration of an instrument is now a valid part of that instrument's history.

Live Performance: Concerts and Recitals.

Live performance, in the form of concerts and recitals, constitutes a slightly different field of musical activity from the idea of demonstration found in examples such as the Magnificent Music Machines. The use of music in concerts and recitals tends to be for a limited period only, or for a one-off performance, rather than an everyday occurrence. Single, individual concerts of this sort are normally restricted to either musical museums with 'working collections' (the Russell Collection), or to museums where replica or modern instruments are brought in for concert performances (the Horniman Museum).[161] Working collections are usually the pursuit of private enthusiasts, some of whom open their collections to

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[160]*Ibid* , p.7. Italics are my own.

[161]A growing phenomenon is the increasing number of music groups specialising in museum work. For example, 'Early Music Today' will organise a visit by a chamber music group whose period instruments will match those of the museum's collection. *Museums Journal* (August 1994), p.43.

the public: the Burnett Collection of Historical Keyboard Instruments at Finchcocks [162] and the Benton-Fletcher Collection at Fenton House,[163] are exceptional examples, in that - like the Russell Collection - they are actively demonstrated and maintained for demonstration. The benefit of a collection in playing condition, is that visitors are given the opportunity to see and hear 'authentic' performance at work; ideally music performed on suitable instruments, often in an aesthetically-pleasing surroundings with a correct acoustic.[164]

Classical working collectionslike the Russell Collection act as a reminder that many important collections exist for the purpose of making historical instruments playable again. By 1968 - when the collection was gifted to Edinburgh University - most of the instruments had already been restored; and so the museum must balance the subsequent treatment of the instruments whilst also honouring the benefactor's original intentions. Specialist instruments kept at performance standard require more conservation and restoration work than those not played; and this is a continuous process. Also, the question of achieving a balance between playing and conservation policies frequently lies with the personal interpretation of a single curator, in deciding how much use an instrument will have, if indeed it is played at all.[165] Playing Collections, aware of the vicariousness of their position, are therefore keen to appear ethically sound and musically 'aware'. The most positive result of this has been in the flowering of sound documentation: where instruments are seldom played, their concerts are

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[162]The Richard Burnett Collection of Historical Keyboard Instruments, Finchcocks, Goudhurst, Kent. Opened 1977; 70 instruments.
[163]The Benton-Fletcher Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments, Fenton House, Hampstead, London. Founded 1937; 19 instruments.
[164]Both the Benton-Fletcher and Burnett Collections have country-house settings, and perform in rooms with acoustical properties sympathetic to the period of instrument being played.
[165]Information based on a tour of the Russell Collection given by Grant O'Brien, Curator, *CIMCIM Conference*, Edinburgh, 6.6.94.

recorded for posterity, compiling in-house music archives.[166] Preserving the sound of the instrument is just as vital - if not moreso - as is preserving the physical body of the instrument.

Currently, the dilemmas of conservation and performance ethics are pronounced: most of the 'academic' museums discussed here, in keeping with the official policy of state-funded museums, do *not* restore their instruments, in the belief that doing so destroys evidence of the past.[167] Private collections, meanwhile, have the opportunity to restore rather than preserve if they so wish. In this way, two different policies are working in parallel, creating a duality of both 'active' and 'passive' music collections. However, few instruments are robust enough to withstand repeated demonstrations or the rigours of frequent concerts, and herein lies the museums' dilemma: demonstration is of benefit to the visitors, but it is at the expense of the instruments. This being so, museums need to find alternative ways of presenting the aural aspect of a musical instrument without having to compromise conservation ethics. Reproduction instruments, in the manner of Arnold Dolmetsch's work, may provide the solution to these problems in the future,[168] as the policy of not restoring historic musical instruments - even mechanical ones - becomes the norm. Also, the repairs, re-tuning and necessary use of new parts required by restoration, incurs considerable expense which only the larger museums can contemplate; and although nothing can compete with

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[166]The Russell Collection records many of its recitals. In 1994 the Royal College of Music opened a new recording studio with the intention of recording restored instruments for posterity.

[167]This includes the British Museum, Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, the Horniman Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

[168]For example, reconstructions modelled on extant versions - such as the copies made of the Royal College of Music Museum's clavicytherium (c.1480 - the earliest known keyboard instrument) to produce an idea of how it might have sounded. Elizabeth Wells 'The Clavicytherium and its Copy in the Royal College of Music Museum', CIMCIM Publications(1994),pp.28-34. However, it is not necessary for reproduction instruments to be historic: The Powerhouse Museum, Haymarket, Australia, has an in-house violin maker, who shows how the basic instrument is made and allows children to help him create and perform. He is one of a number of voluntary visiting craftsmen. (Information supplied by Michael Lea, Curator of Music, The Powerhouse Museum, CIMCIM 'Working Group on Exhibition and Education', Edinburgh, 6.6.94.)

seeing an instrument played, there is the practical consideration of employing someone to perform, or the outlay required for one-off recitals. On balance, the use of audio equipment is likely to be less expensive in the long term; once the instrument (or a comparable one) has been recorded, then the sound is captured *for posterity* and the thorny problem of placing unnecessary strain on the instrument through performance is avoided.

The Sound of Silence

Before going on to discuss the use of music in museums in more detail, it may be beneficial to take note of the museums which chose not to use any music in their displays, and their reasons for making the decision to be silent.

Gloucester Folk Museum's collection of military instruments and twentieth-century gramophones is small and the display space available is limited, so that the inclusion of any aural facilities would have to take the form of Walkman tapes or headphones. Background music would not be suitable; sound would carry easily throughout the rest of the museum and would lose its relevance if the visitor had moved on to the neighbouring display about 'Dairy Farming in Gloucestershire', while still being serenaded by a military band. In truth, for the rare occasions when it is on display, this particular music collection is really too small to incur the expense of audio equipment - there are other more pressing needs within the museum. By contrast, both the Ranger's House and the Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum would have benefited from a selective use of sound. In the case of the Ranger's House, the instruments recreated by Dolmetsch were *designed* to be played - as author of *The Interpretation of the Music of the XVII and XVIII Centuries* (1915), he was primarily concerned with the re-discovery of a more authentic sound, through performance on (copies of) ancient instruments. Here, the deployment of illustrative music would be a valid extension of

Dolmetsch's principles, although, once again, this collection is relatively small and the beauty of the Ranger's House setting would not be enhanced by either background music or headsets for audio equipment built into the displays. A compromise might be to copy its parent museum, the Horniman Museum, by using optional Walkman headsets.

The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum, by virtue of its subject matter, would seem to be one of the more obvious types of music museum at which music could be provided in some form. The marketing potential alone is great, though aside from commercial concerns, the opportunity to hear Holst's music could only lead to a fuller appreciation of his life and works in a museum setting that seeks to be conspicuously realistic: its relative 'ordinariness' may be contrasted with the importance of Holst's works and so it *is* necessary to hear the music. Although access to Holst's music is currently not available on an everyday basis, the museum is aware of the benefits of live music, and to this end, (despite the limited size of the museum premises), holds occasional lectures and concerts. In July 1991, for example, this included a talk on 'Holst's Music available on Compact Disc'. Live music is found here in small informal concerts and it is eventually intended to install a headphone audio system so that visitors may hear Holst's music in these sympathetic surroundings.[169] Clearly, music is highly desirable when not used for extraneous purposes; in these museums, it appears that music is either used for a specific purpose or not at all. The 'aural wallpaper' effect is one they have successfully avoided.

The use of sound recordings for the British Museum's extensive musical instrument collection is not feasible: the instruments are dispersed throughout so many rooms and individual departments that, for purely practical terms, the

[169]Letter from Mary Greensted, Keeper of Museums, Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums, (14.11.91).

application of a comprehensive audio system would be highly unlikely. Audio systems are usually only an option where the musical collection is gathered together as an entity in itself (the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Ranger's House), and the British Museum is not specifically a 'Music Museum'; there is no reason why music as a category should be singled out for special attention. Nevertheless, in examples such as this, where it is difficult to take advantage of audio facilities, it is still possible to make some *musically oriented* comments and suggestions about how these ancient instruments may have sounded; the British Museum holds many unfamiliar and curious instruments and so such information would not be extraneous. All visitors, musical or not, will appreciate an instrument more fully, if they have an understanding - even an approximation - of how it sounded. Understanding something about the sound an instrument produces also helps to explain its design and the materials from which it is made; all of these aspects are interconnected. Musical instruments may be beautiful and interesting in their own right, but it is important to be able to hear (or at least have an imaginative image of) what they sounded like, and, if possible, to *see* musicians playing them.

A Policy of Silence

Paradoxically, the most persuasive reasons given by a museum music collection for deliberately choosing silence in preference over sound are those set down by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Unlike many smaller museums - such as Gloucester Folk Museum - where instruments contribute only a minor part of the overall holdings, or the massive but dispersed collections of the British Museum, which is inappropriate for the adoption of audio facilities, the Victoria and Albert Museum's musical collection is housed together in a special display gallery where background music, headphones or Walkman tapes could practically - and aesthetically - be used easily. Undoubtedly, this display would benefit from a

Walkman or headphone facility: the category may be one of 'Decorative Art and Furniture', yet in its labelling and cataloguing system the museum pays close attention to the mechanism and working of the instruments. The opportunity to hear an instrument (through a recording of a replica or comparable instrument), would supplement the scholarly detail given on design and workings. The 'National Collection of Historical Musical Instruments' should be worthy of aural elucidation; but instead, the museum has chosen to keep quiet:

> The display is silent ... this is not entirely at odds with the makers' intentions for many of the instruments were made almost as much to be seen as heard.[170]

It would be true to say that the interpretation of a collection often rests with the personal taste and policies of its curator and with the prevailing mood of the time. In the 'Foreword' to its *Catalogue of Non-Keyboard Instruments*, the Victoria and Albert Museum discusses the eminent musicologist Gerald Hayes and his curatorial beliefs, c.1930. He was:

> ... one of a number of musical scholars whose dedication to the cause of restoring early instruments to active use brought a grim hostility towards things felt to stand in the way of progress, like collectors' glass cases and non-performers' enjoyment of their imprisoned contents. This attitude, which has played its due part in stimulating antiquarian performance, nevertheless shuts its eyes to the fact that throughout their history, musical instruments have been things to possess as well as things to play.[171]

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[170] *The Victoria and Albert Museum General Guidebook* p.40.
[171] Anthony Baines, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: Catalogue of Musical Instruments, Vol.II - Non-Keyboard Instruments*, p.x.

However, to invert this idea for a new generation of museum visitors, interpreting a collection in terms of decorative art should *not* detract from its status as 'musical material'; regardless of even the most fantastic decoration, a musical instrument's first purpose is to create sound. The Victoria and Albert Museum needs to *acknowledge* this fact, even if they do not choose to concentrate upon it in the interpretation of their musical collection.

The Physics and Acoustics of Sound

If presenting *music*(as a creative process of organised sounds) is difficult within the object-based collections of music museums, then how much more problematic would be the presentation of the acoustical properties that make up that sound, as a museum topic?

The physics of musical instruments is sometimes touched upon in the more academic museums' descriptive labels; but it is rarely explored in any depth.[172] Although there is much common ground with subjects discussed in the Science Museum - being conceptual rather than concrete -[173] the physics of sound is normally shown *in application*, not in its own right. In the Science Museum, visitors may be able to discover how sound waves enabled broadcasting, but not what exactly a sound wave *is*. However, it is not impossible to present musical principles in a museum setting: a notable example of this was the Livesey Museum's 'Sounds Great' exhibition, an interactive children's exhibition 'exploring the world of sound'.[174] Any discovery of music and sound is ideally

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[172]An exception to this is the Horniman Museum's new 'Music Gallery', which includes a hands-on area to show the basic musical principles of sound production.
[173]See Chapter 9 for discussion of 'conceptual' museum subjects.
[174]The Livesey Museum, London, 19 June 1992 - 19 April 1993. The museum has a temporary exhibition space and presents one major and one lower key exhibition each year. It has no permanent collections.

suited to a 'hands-on' approach; and children especially are motivated to think about the production and transmission of sound through personal involvement.

> ... the theme was deliberately chosen from the diurnal experience of its young visitors. Without setting out explicitly to be 'scientific', this approach of tackling simple subjects from unusual angles produces shows where scientific ideas are uncovered still attractively wrapped in familiar cultural contexts.[175]

The exhibition set out to examine basic aspects of sound: the voice and ear, vibration and resonance, the transmission and reflection of sound, the operation of a loudspeaker, the effects of damping, and unusual ways of making sounds. The nature of sound was dealt with, primarily, before moving on to explore machines that make, transmit, record and replay sound. These 'sound machines' varied from cylinders from the earliest days of recording to the latest 'ghetto-blaster'. The use of many sections and separate' experiments' within the exhibition allowed the visitors to wander and to choose their own areas of interest. The designers aimed deliberately for a non 'museum' atmosphere to encourage youthful hands-on activities, whilst balancing this with explanatory labels for the more adult visitor contingent.[176] Interactive exhibits were blended with the more traditional museum objects, so that there were things to look at as well as things to do, and this was mirrored in the museum's two-page children's worksheet, which balanced the *observation* of objects 'Which is the oldest sound machine?' with *active experiment* 'Pluck a string and draw what you see on the tv screen'.

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[175]Ken Arnold, Assistant Keeper, the Livesey Museum, August 1992.

[176]Letter from Nicky Boyd, Assistant keeper, the Livesey Museum, 18.2.94. Above all, the exhibition was designed to be visually and aurally stimulating. This included a backdrop of mural displays inspired by musical sound and an informal concert resulting from a workshop for 5-11 year olds, the latter described by Carolyn O'Grady, 'Sounding Off', *The Times Educational Supplement*(9.10.92).

'Sounds Great' was a success because it showed that concepts of 'sound' could be demonstrated in an easily understandable and accessible way. This was achieved by explaining the basic principles involved - a shallow water-filled tray as the starting-point for sound-wave experiments; a large model of the human ear was employed to show how we receive and translate sound. Later, with more complex theories in the exhibition, it was not so much necessary to understand the laws of physics governing an experiment, as to bring home certain basic facts: that hard smooth surfaces reflect sound, while soft bumpy ones absorb it; that sound travels differently in solids, liquids and gas es. The exhibition also allowed children to apply these aural theories to create musical sound, for example by performing on the 'light lyre', an electronic instrument played by interrupting beams of light with the fingers. As a teaching vehicle, the exhibition was also notable in the quality of its outreach work, encouraging the children to think about musical *issues*; to relate what they had learnt about sound to their own lives. Suggestions included ideas for experiments to show the differences between *listening* and *hearing*, and to look at noise pollution. By comparison, academic music museums rarely explore musical *issues*; this is to their deficit, because an interesting discourse - whether historical or contemporary - would certainly bring to life their many cases of musical instruments.

Sound Archives

If the key problem with music collections is that they represent music through only the physical material of objects (instruments, scores and ephemera), then it should be possible to learn something from the reverse situation - namely sound archives, wherein *sound* rather than the physical object, forms the musical collection. Understandably, a sound archive cannot exist in the usual way of museum display; its function is to be listened to, not viewed. Further, a sound archive is an *archive*, not a museum; it is unlikely to attract visitors in general for its own sake,

but is a resource centre for enquiries. The National Sound Archive is an exception, in that it *does* have a small museum-style display of mainly early gramophone equipment, but this is only a subsidiary of a far broader concern. Where music museums can happily show musical objects without the addition of sound, the reverse does not work for a sound archive: it is complete in itself, while music museums are compelled to have *visual interest*.

> The eye, which is called the window of the soul, is the chief means whereby the understanding may most fully and abundantly appreciate the infinite works of nature; and the ear is the second, in as much as it acquires its importance from the fact that it hears the things which the eye has seen.[177]

However, increasingly people now hear music divorced from its source - it is not necessary to see musicians performing music 'live' in order to be able to listen to it, nor is it necessary for sound archives to *show* music being played. Achieving a balance between sight and sound is dependent upon the criteria of each independent collection; obviously, this balance is weighted in a sound archive, but for a music museum, the two should be of equal importance - an aural-visual partnership at least.

Although it is not technically a museum, the National Sound Archive is included in this study because it is of interest in the following areas:

a) Its own small museum display.

b) Its attitude towards sound recordings in *archive* form.

c) Its potential for use as a resource centre for music museums.

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[177]Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* trans. & ed. Edmond MacCurdy(Jonathon Cape), p.40.

The National Sound Archive Museum constitutes a reverse of the normal music museum procedure of focusing on objects, with occasional access to musical sound. For the Archive's researchers, the museum acts as a visual reminder of how sound is captured and reproduced.[178] The exhibition is housed in one small compact room (allowing entry to only a handful of visitors at a time), with cases of exhibits continuing along a staircase and landing. Space is at a premium,[179] so what is displayed (out of about three-hundred artefacts) has to be choice and concisely explained. Large text panels and historic illustrations provide a chronological account, decade by decade, of important events contributing to the phenomenon of the Recording Industry. In a visitor-activated loop-system narrative, we are informed that we buy over two-hundred million records, cassettes and compact discs a year; the importance of recorded music to us is then traced briefly through its history, interspersed by snippets of period recordings. The historical precedent for the display is also, however, balanced by an awareness of new technologies and innovations within the recording industry: a central display case includes the latest compact disc player, and narrative such as the following text, acknowledges the bond between music and the sound-producing vehicle:

> We keep more than three quarters of a million discs in the *National Sound Archive* , but they are useless without machines to play them on.... Look out for the story of Nipper the dog, Captain Scott's Gramophone, World War I, First radiograms, invention of stereo. How have discs changed in the 1980s?[180]

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[178]The exhibition, entitled 'Revolutions in Sound', was opened in May 1989 to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of sound recording on cylinders, discs and records and traces the history through selected artefacts.

[179]Display space is indeed problematic, with some of the glass cases reaching twelve feet up the wall, where it is impossible to see the uppermost items properly or to read the labels.

[180]Display label, the National Sound Archive, 1993.

Technological feats are placed in historical context - the Wright brother's flight, the invention of talking pictures. In the large text panels, the emphasis is social-historical rather than mechanical in tone, for example, in describing how radio led to the growth of popular music and inadvertently helped its 'rival' the recording industry later on. Even when the information given is technical, for example, an account of digital recording, as developed by the Japanese in the 1970s, (where sound is expressed in sound waves as a string of binary digits), it is placed in context - the recording industry boom, during which manufacturers of gramophones became makers of components rather than whole items. Where music was used in this exhibition, it was used *atmospherically*, to illustrate a particular decade,[181] rather than to demonstrate the qualities of any particular artefact. Behind the scenes, the Archive has also done much to encourage new methods of copying historic recordings and of conserving its delicate cylinders, rolls and discs.[182] Here, there is an opportunity for music museum collections to make use of the *active* nature of the sound archive's material to enhance displays, through the use of concrete archive material, sound guides and background music.

In comparison with many music museums, the National Sound Archive is startlingly up-to-date in its collections.[183] With rare exceptions, hardly any modern music has been collected by the object-based museums, whereas sound archives continue to augment their contemporary classical, popular and non-

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[181]For example, by playing a cheering version of the song 'When can I have a banana again?' for the 1940s - World War II items.

[182]The National Sound Archive is at the forefront of conservation work. Presently, it is conducting laboratory tests on optical discs for storing sounds, images and documentation with a view to establishing the best archival medium for the future. *National Sound Archive Leaflet: Professional Services*, (the British Library, 1993). Meanwhile, *Museums of Music* has described the scope for further archival recordings of museum 'playing' collections. Ideally, it suggests a systematic programme to document in sound recordings all of the United Kingdom's major playing collections. *Museums of Music*, p.56.

[183]This is true of its artefacts as well as its aural collections. Electronic instruments have been actively collected, from a 1973 'HMV Radiogram' to an EMI disc-cutting lathe. Professional tape recorders from the 1950s and 1960s help to show early noise-reduction technology.

Western holdings. The National Sound Archive has an active policy of acquiring new music: each week it records 'off air' a number of new compositions from Radio Three, in addition to radio and television programmes regarding talks by composers, their music, performances and the organisations that serve them. The National Sound Archive is clearly progressive, in working *with* other musical organisations: for example, in February 1993, it chaired a symposium on 'Contemporary Music and the Recording Industry' with the *International Society for Contemporary Music* and the *Society for the Promotion of New Music.*[184] Music museums also could ally themselves to organisations which have a vested interest in them; one that would hopefully result in a reciprocal arrangement between museum collections and 'active' musical concerns. Museums need to become aware of a wider world of music; just as theatre or film museums forge successful links with current performing artists - the Museum of the Moving Image's tie-ins with the National Film Theatre, and the exhibitions on both the Royal Ballet and the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Theatre Museum, are examples. A reciprocal cross-current of ideas and artefacts could also be achieved on a simpler scale, with small museums using local concerts, amateur musicians and visiting performers, as allies.[185]

Taken as one body, sound archives constitute a highly disparate set of institutions. In 1984, *The Association of Sound Archives' Register of Collections of Recorded Sound* included six-hundred entries (excluding those of public libraries), and, like museums, each of these archives will have its own ideas and uses within the scope of its holdings.[186]

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[184]*Playback* - Bulletin of the National Sound Archive(Summer 1993), p.4.
[185]The Horniman Museum often advertises and links exhibitions to local performances.
[186]For a breakdown of sound archive types see Jeremy Silver, 'Astonished and somewhat terrified': the preservation and development of aural culture.', *The Museum Time Machine,* ed. Robert Lumley(London, 1988), pp.170-95.

To this end, it is interesting to compare the use of *musical material* in these different types of sound archive: the National Sound Archive [187](chiefly research, academically oriented); the BBC Sound Archive [188](broadcasting); and the North West Sound Archive [189] (smaller and regional). In many ways these three are seen to equate with, respectively, academic, craft/performance and local history categories of museum in their collections and their objectives. The following comments are taken from their respective questionnaires:

The Use of Aural Material in Visual Displays[190]

1. As a resource centre, what do museums use you for?

NSA:[191] Sound effects, music for displays.

BBC:[192] Exhibitions.

N.West:[193] Folk and traditional music source, artists of the North West.

2. How often is the material requested from you linked specifically to a musical display?

NSA: Musical material normally is.

BBC: Rarely. Visual use is for Social/Historical material tied to an event/locality.

N.West: Rarely - there are other commercial libraries.

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[187]The National Sound Archive is a Department of the British Library. It contains approximately 950,000 discs, 150,000 hours of tape, 10,000 videos and 300 artefacts.
[188]The BBC Sound Archive is part of the British Broadcasting Corporation. It has approximately 500, 000 items. Together, the BBC and NSA holds as much material as the rest of the country put together.
[189]The North West Sound Archive, Clitheroe, Lancashire. Local authority governed, holding approximately 80,000 items.
[190]Concerning only music or aural recordings relating to music, composers, performers etc.
[191]Questionnaire received from Benet Bergonzi, Curator of Artefacts, the National Sound Archive, 28.2.94.
[192]Questionnaire received from Mark Jones, Head of BBC Sound Library and Archive, 18.2.94.
[193]Questionnaire received from Ken Howarth, Sound Archivist, North West Sound Archive, 22.2.94.

3. How often is it for general background music?

NSA: Rarely as charges and copyright would typically be a contra-indication.

BBC: Never.

N.West: Never.

4. Is your sound material always used in a museum with a *visual* display?

All: Yes.

5. Has there ever been a display of sound/music in its own right?

All: No.

6. Do you put on your own 'exhibitions' of sound material?

NSA: No.

BBC: Yes. The BBC has used sound montages at exhibitions for anniversaries etc. A travelling exhibition uses archive material on headphones and via a jukebox.

N.West: Yes - but not exclusively music.

7. Do you give guided tours or special lectures?

NSA: Demonstrations of old gramophones etc. from artefacts collection, talks or tours to small groups by arrangement.

BBC: No tours. Lectures specifically on sound archives are provided on request.

N.West: Yes - by arrangement, though not specifically music.

8. Sound, music and other aural archives are found increasingly in museums. How do you think this will develop in the future?

NSA: Obviously they will develop, but in all areas other than music, may be increasingly superseded by video.[194]

BBC: Oral history will continue to develop. Changes in copyright legislation will make museum access to broadcast material easier and will stimulate increased use.

N.West. Unlikely to develop further at the present time as resources are cut.

9. Which methods of sound reproduction do you think work best in a museum?

NSA: It entirely depends upon the nature of the gallery, the type of visitor and the display.

BBC: 'Live' sound is the most impressive aurally. Headphones are popular - one can better focus on accompanying written material. Jukeboxes are fun!

N.West: Live sound.

Sound archives, because of the nature of the subject, are not usually considered in the same category as music museums. They are, however, equally of importance in this study because they embody the realisation that aural material is as valuable as concrete artefacts, when dealing with musical subjects.[195] The differences between sound archives and museums are not, in fact, all that great: the National Sound Archive functions like a museum by being:

> ... involved in many areas of recording and related research. Curators provide advice and promote activity in their own subject areas, while

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[194]As a future development, one of the most ambitious is the setting-up of the NSA's *Jukebox* aural network - 'Applying Telenatic Technologies to Improve Public Access to Sound Archives'. This is a co-operative project supported by the Libraries Programme Commission of the European Communities, to encourage on-line computer access to sound archives. It s hoped eventually to extend it to include visual information (photographs, musical scores, labels) and moving images (television, documentary, film).

[195]The National Sound Archive moves with the times; it is aware that many contemporary aural material has a strong visual bias and this is borne out in its growing number of collected commercial and promotional videos.

> publications, events and programmes and public exhibitions address a wide range of interests.[196]

The possibilities for working in partnership with music museums could, and should be exploited to better effect than they are at present. Museums most commonly employ sound archives to supply a specific object or soundtrack, but many sound archives also hold a wealth of associated material - photographs, original record sleeves and publicity literature - available for loan. Larger institutions like the National Sound Archive can also offer practical help through access to their catalogues, discographies and reference books; transcription services and specialist conservation work.

Curiously, in spite of its increasing prominence in other types of museum collection, music displays have made sparse use of oral history. Oral history accounts may well have been listened-to by the curator in order to acquire background knowledge for a display, but it is not used *explicitly* - where visitors may access it for themselves - in any musical collection.[197] This is surprising, for the recording of life stories and memories onto tape (and increasingly video), acts as a 'powerful historical tool',[198] and seems immediately valid because we empathise with the human, personal voice.

> In museums, oral history as sound can enliven static displays and more directly engage an ever-demanding public. It fills in gaps in the written documentation of the past.[199]

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[196]Introduction leaflet *The National Sound Archive* (The British Library, 1993).
[197]In sport museums (another 'active' subject matter), the opposite appears to be the case: the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum and British Golf Museum both use oral history accounts to great effect, as does the Science Museum.
[198]The National Sound Archive Leaflet, *Oral History* (The British Library, 1993).
[199]*Ibid* .

In this, oral history especially has unexplored potential for musical subjects: the chance of injecting a sense of the live and practical aspects of music into museum display through the experiences of people whose livelihood has been, or remains, a musical one. Access to the accounts of performers, conductors, concert managers, instrument makers and so forth from different musical periods and genres, could be chosen to suit specific museum displays; it would also help to alleviate the text-heavy approach of the more academic collections, while placing the instruments in their proper musical context. Recordings of music performed, with artefacts and instruments spoken about as well as seen, would, in combination, result in a multi-dimensional interpretation and better understanding of the music. Oral history could also be used as a medium through which to present musical history through juxtaposition: for example, visitors could compare reminiscences of an orchestral player of the 1930s with a contemporary one, or a Dance Band manager from the 1950s with the agent of a pop group today.[200]

It is apparent that as a society we are ever-more aware of the importance of aural culture. With a dramatic change of attitude, we are now concerned to retain and conserve for posterity much of what was previously considered 'throw-away': In the recent past, for example, the BBC retained *written* scripts, but disposed of the programmes themselves. The physical object used to be valued over all, but now it is not so much the object (the script) itself that curators wish to preserve - for it is just the means of creating the *experience* of the programme - but a sense of the active, transitory broadcast which makes the script valid as an object. The realisation that the script alone cannot provide in total what makes a programme or performance special, underlies all archives of such material.

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[200]The National Sound Archive is currently collecting an 'Oral History of British Jazz', (1993).

> Ultimately, the function of sound recordings and indeed of all audio-visual media in cultural institutions centres on questions of power. The power behind technical and production knowledge; the power to obtain access to materials; and the power to be able to disseminate them.[201]

Above all, the use of recorded sound depends upon the imagination and motivation of those who wish, quite literally, to listen . It may be deployed in many forms and be as sparse or as prolific as the type of museum exhibition warrants.[202] Sound archives are currently branching-out to collect artefacts and associated visual material; forging alliances with musical organisations and performers, while many musical museums, by comparison, are still concerned only with the immediacy of the musical object. If museums are unable, or reluctant, to emulate the improved attributes of sound archives, then they should at least make better use of the sound archives' increased resources and musical understanding for their own displays.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the most encouraging motive for including music in these museums, in whatever form, is that it encourages a reaction from visitors, who - in a music-conscious Western world - are unlikely to listen to musical input apathetically. Even if their reaction is a negative one and they do not enjoy what they are listening to, the music is still conveying basic information to them that could not be gleaned from looking at object-based collections alone. Also, nothing has the capability to create an atmosphere as rapidly and as persuasively as music can: to a great extent music museums have the power to 'control' the

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[201]Jeremy Silver, 'Astonished and somewhat terrified', p.194.

[202]At the farthest extreme, oral history, narrative, background music and sound effects are now an integral and crucial part of most 'experience' museums and theme parks. Disneyland is the most virulent example. By contrast, for many general visitors, museums appear to be oppressively silent.

interest and the responses of their visitors. Such a use of music works best when it is found in a contextual setting, or in a thematic display. Thus, it is easier to use music as a background to an exhibition about Mozart because the subject 'Mozart' is a single topic, than it is to apply music *in general* to eclectic, wide-ranging instrument-based collections, where the music would be required to illustrate a variety of very diverse instrumental sounds and works.

If the demonstration of instruments is no longer a valid option for the majority of museums, then it is the duty of these museums to find other ways in which to sustain the visitors' interest through a more *musically aware* interpretation of the subject. While conservation is an academic interest, the general public are far more curious about the *musicality* of the instrument than about its degree of authenticity. If the larger museums wish to remedy this, to increase public awareness about conservation matters, they could perhaps consider making the process of conservation and restoration an active part of their display, showing what goes on behind the scenes in the museum, and explaining why it is such necessary and sometimes controversial work. For visitors, non-playing collections are further compensated for by access to well-made and playable replicas, and the availability of sound recordings.

Jeremy Silver[203] argues that some may see the collecting of aural material by museums (even to complement artefacts), as invasive. Invasiveness is also the commonest reason given by museums for not including live sound in their displays; it is implied that its use might prevent visitors from using their own imagination about the material exhibits. Certainly, sound *does* attract attention to a display; and it is equally arguable that visitors are quite capable of reading and listening simultaneously, without the sound causing annoyance, and that the use of music is just as likely to inspire and encourage visitors' thinking about exhibits as

[203]Jeremy Silver, 'Astonished and somewhat terrified', pp.190-95.

it is to curtail it. The museums which make use of sound, be it pre-recorded or live, are capable of breaking down some of the 'barriers' surrounding supposedly difficult or elitist areas, such as classical and non-Western music; genres which are often perceived as belonging to the history books, or of a 'type' that is inaccessible to ordinary people. Music breaks down barriers because it requires people to *listen*; although it is a specialised subject, it is also a universal language in that most people are still able - often unconsciously - to pick-up aspects of rhythm, melody and texture, even if they do not understand the music in any technical sense. Indeed, in the majority of cases, museums with important musical holdings *would* like to make use of , or improve their use of, audio facilities:

> In the opinion of many, this [audio facilities] should be the crucial dimension of a music collection....it is surprising that as yet there is so little evidence of it being developed widely as a means of interpretation of music collections.[204]

Sound systems ought then to be encouraged, for they benefit music collections in a dual capacity, by enhancing the visitors' enjoyment and understanding, and by acting as a method of conservation, as sound facilities negate the need for live demonstrations. Also, in an age of increasing fascination with technology, a sound system is often a persuasive visitor attraction in its own right. The music industry is constantly seeking to re-invent and improve the technology surrounding music production, and some of its ideas might well be adapted to museum purposes. For example, IBM recently announced a 'CD on Demand' kiosk which will '... let a customer select the music of his or her choice, and see the artists' concert schedule, together with a video snippet of them in action.'[205]

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[204]*Museums of Music* p.45.
[205]Nicholas Bannister, 'IBM announces do-it-yourself music making', *The Guardian* (5.9.93).

The current financial restraints placed upon most museums may make audio equipment seem like a 'luxury' item, but considered as high-profile, front of house attributes, sound systems at least have a realistic potential for sponsorship from outside sources.

As a plan for the future, music museums would do well to look at other museums dealing with collections of transitory material, (most notably the spoken word, film and sport), in order to learn from them. Museums concerned with the history of film and television especially, offer many parallels with music collections through their different approaches towards the display and interpretation of material, regardless of their technologies being 'new' in museum terms. Although their collections are very recent, when compared with the antiquity of collections of musical instruments and the long-established nature of music museums, few visitors would expect to visit the Museum of the Moving Image and be able only to look at the cameras and stills of film-making, without at some point *seeing* part of a film or the action of a moving image. In such a museum, the ability to see a film would be taken for granted as part of the 'museum experience'; the interpretation of the material would seem incomplete without this element and yet, comparatively, this would have been the case in most music museums. To be successful in the future, it clearly will not be possible to divorce the musical instrument either from the sound it creates, or the music written for it.

CHAPTER 5

A PERIOD OF MODULATION: THE FUTURE EVOLUTION OF MUSIC MUSEUMS

It is apparent that, increasingly, museums are becoming more than simple repositories for objects and that this has special implications when the objects are musical ones. From the museums studied it is clear that a re-evaluation is needed of music as 'objects' in the field of museology. As Leo Treiter writes: 'It isn't the pastness of our objects that distinguishes them as 'historical' or us as 'historians'. It is our interest in them as objects (or acts) in tradition.'[206] He goes on to stress the importance of *understanding*, which takes on a special significance when we consider the historical bias of the major music collections:

> History is a discipline, not by virtue of a particular subject matter, but by virtue of an epistemological stance....The difference turns on the question of what it is to *understand* the music of the past, particularly on the matter of *context* again.[207]

At one extreme stands the historical academic-styled collection, dedicated above all to the presentation of important musical objects, but often with displays that may be fifteen years old and without the resources to up-date them. It is obvious that such museums will appear dull when contrasted with the more contemporary and up-market realisations of musical subjects: at worst, illustrative and contextual material is used sparingly, the overall look is textually overwhelming and without access to musical sound. Many of these museums now find themselves in competition for the non-specialist audience - which constitutes the bulk of

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[206]Leo Treiter, 'Structure and Critical Analysis', *Musicology in the 1980s*, ed. Holoman & Palisca(1982), p.68.
[207]*Ibid.*, p.69.

museum visitors - in the face of the encroaching 'hands-on' and audio-visual take-over at the other extreme of the museum spectrum. By contrast, the 'trump card' played by - and relied upon - by the 'traditional' museum is that it deals with genuine artefacts rather than facsimiles; however, in a competitive visitor market these still have to be interpreted well, with a sense of their significance and context: objects can only be what museum curators make of them. Although to some extent there has been a reaction against the dramatic increase of 'hands-on' and high technology in general in museums, this has been the reaction from *within* the museum profession rather than from the visitors themselves, although nostalgia for the old-fashioned 'traditional' style of museum is also voiced by those who see the new breed of technology being applied *for its own sake,* rather than being used as a complement to a collection. The fear that museums will be undermined by adopting a more populist approach has, unfortunately, dissuaded many from tackling (musical) areas within the museum world that have not moved with the times. However, museums and theme parks are not the same; their attractions and function are quite distinct, and it is unlikely that museums would ever be superseded by a vogue whose aims are so dissimilar. The important question is therefore one of museum 'image', for clearly curators wish displays to become more user-friendly and true to the subject they are presenting; and this requires a far better understanding of how the populist end of the 'heritage industry' works.

In presenting musical subjects, the museums concerned need to have an appreciation of how music is perceived by ordinary people. As with most musical exhibitions for example, music *teaching* in the United Kingdom is historically based - even biased - and the ambivalent attitude towards music in schools is typical of the attitude of society itself. Music is a part of almost all world-wide cultures and yet it is treated as a minority or extra-curricular subject in most schools: unconsciously, we assume that when it is *taught*, music has to be treated

in narrowly specific ways, a reasoning that also appears to have been perpetuated by museums in the past. For the future, though, music in schools is set to change, as the *National Curriculum Music Working Group Interim Report* [208] insists that the *practical* nature of music be stressed over that of theory alone. A new 'Philosophy of Music for All' will combine the activities of listening, performing and composing with the intention of developing skills in *listening,* as the true basis for all musical understanding. When the close ties between museums and school teaching is remembered, ought not museums to emulate these new educational policies and revised musical approach?

> If we are to excite children's enthusiasm for music we must include a central thesis of participation. Activity is the key ingredient to spark interest. Many members of the public have been actively put off classical music because of the way it was taught in schools in the past.[209]

It is obvious that museums must not be seen to be a continuation of the 'old school system'; yesterday's bored school children have become today's general museum visiting public. It is, therefore, comparatively easy for people to be put off music when it is associated in any way with 'academia', moreso when it is contrasted with the user-friendly and blatantly populist manner in which it is experienced in daily life. Museums can no longer afford to be elitist regarding music, and any hint of a sanctimonious disposition will not win them a consistent future audience.

> Some argue that their responsibilities as a music curator are primarily to serve the specialist audience who seek their attention most actively; in effect they claim that music students, scholars and instrument makers are those who will benefit most from these collections. Perhaps not

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[208]Elizabeth A.W.Poulson , 'The National Curriculum Music Working Group Interim Report', *Incorporated Society of Musicians Music Journal,* (May 1991) pp.337-9.
[209]*Ibid.,* p.350.

> unsurprisingly, therefore, most university and conservatoire curators are able to find little time to cultivate or serve a wider public.[210]

Yet, in spite of this statement, museums *have* to change. Indeed the overwhelming response from the letters and questionnaires received in connection with this work is that curators *want* to appeal to a broad cross-section of society; they do not want museums to be viewed either as elitist entities in themselves or in their individual collections. The difficulty is one of polarisation, with the 'museum' mentality at one extreme and the 'theme park' at the other, separated by a middle no-man's-land of 'compromise'. Unfortunately, this unstable middle-ground is often where the general adult museum visitor is standing - a figure often neglected. It is typical that, for example, while most museums produce a scholarly academic catalogue and basic children's worksheets, there is comparatively little of the 'middle-brow' available for the middle-ground visitor; and the museum displays frequently follow a similar pattern.

Music exhibitions treated from 'scratch' however, freed of the necessity to follow long-established historical practice in the presentation of musical objects, are able to interpret their material in a more imaginative way. This will be demonstrated, for example, in the presentation of 'Music' in the planned new Museum of Scotland (due to open in 1998), their change of musical focus being due to 'public demand' and the general evolution of display techniques. At the outset, the museum's description states that *music* is more than just musical instrument; it will aim to be comprehensive and less object-based than is usual with a greater emphasis on musical sound. From the belief that the musical instruments included cannot be studied in isolation, the museum intends to examine *concepts* of national identity and culture as a background to, for example, *Piobroch* and

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[210] *Museums of Music,* p.35.

Clarsach music;[211] while the formation of musical sound itself is also studied through how birdsong influenced *keaning* [212] and its Scots-Irish heritage. The recently re-created *Carnix* (an ancient Scottish zoomorphic horn) will be shown alongside material demonstrating how - pictorially - it evolved in design and sound from its Norse originals. Throughout the exhibition, the music will *always* be placed in context: a sixteenth-century Psalter will be heard beside its written musical form, and its contemporary ecclesiastical artefacts; the subject is thus taught through key exhibits so that the *object* remains the central focus, but is dictated to by the *musical* subject matter.[213]

Central to such interpretative changes is the visitors' wish to have access to the sound of musical subject matter. Traditionally, museums are silent and still places, whereas music is noisy and active; yet in museum terms, because of this basic quality, it has great potential, for '...sound makes space comprehensible; it introduces time, rhythm, action, all of which are the active ingredients of daily life.'[214] With technical developments making the storage and retrieval of music ever easier, music museums now have less excuse not to make use of - or to be aware of - sound and music. The hands-on method of museum teaching which has proven itself so popular with museum visitors, is also ideally suited to musical concerns. If the visitor 'amenities' match the nature of the subject, then musical interpretation should be becoming increasingly active and practically oriented. In museum display, music requires its practical dimension to present what cannot be accomplished through text alone.

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[211]Respectively, music of the bagpipes and the Celtic harp.
[212]A distinctive style of singing peculiar to the Scots and Irish.
[213]Information based on a paper given by Hugh Cheape, 'Musical Instruments in the New Museum of Scotland', CIMCIM Conference, Edinburgh, 7.6.94.
[214]Marion Segard, *The Museum Time Machine* , ed. Robert Lumley(London, 1988), p.7.

Museums and Contemporary Music

> That few collections have deviated from the collecting fashions and traditions that existed at the time of their establishment is an indication that an appraisal and evaluation of collecting strategies is long overdue.[215]

The pressing need to re-define future collecting policies and to recognise areas of neglect is also vital for the future of music museums. This is most strikingly seen in the hiatus between 'classical' and 'popular' music, and their perception by both music museums and the general public. In the recent past, both the recording industry and the museum establishment have been keen to stress these contrasts, but now, with the increasing blurring of the classical and popular boundaries, both of these parties are finding ways in which to bridge the traditional divide. Commerce may be at the root of much of the record industry's new-found enthusiasm, but for the museums involved it should be the prospect of entering a largely unexplored and visitor-attractive part of our musical life and society that is of interest:

> Traditionally, popular music has been regarded as utilitarian, devoid of aesthetic value while 'serious' music has been viewed as wholly aesthetic, free from the taint of utility, purpose or interest. The collapse of these conventional categories has several methodological implications. Their demise calls for a historical account of the ideological function of such categories - that is the aesthetic dimension of popular music becomes

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[215] *Museums of Music* , p.21.

> visible at the same time that the social and political implications of 'serious music' become unavoidable.[216]

No museum in the United Kingdom has systematically collected popular music; and the documentation and display of these areas has been generally poor in quality. There is therefore a clear disparity between the music most people experience daily and its volume of representation in our music museums. There are several reasons for this, the most obvious being that in many cases museums are taken to be synonymous with the acquisition of 'old' things; age gives these musical instruments dignity and rarity value whereas, by contrast, popular music is readily available and therefore of less immediate interest. Also, semi-consciously ingrained in some museums are concepts of 'high' and 'low' culture, where classical music and its instruments supersede all others, while on the popular front, nostalgia is seen to wane after c.1950s-1960s (the Beatles Story) and contemporary popular music is only presented by the more 'thematic' and commercial end of the market (Rock Circus). Even mechanical music instrument collections are, overwhelmingly, the premise of the independent 'enthusiast' collector, and are often thought of as 'quirky' by the mainstream museum establishment. Music museums seem reluctant to acknowledge that one of music's primary functions is entertainment; certainly this is central to popular music, and yet this quality appears to be anathema to any 'serious' museum's presentation or acquisition of musical material.

In no other musical genre is there as much inherent potential for the collection of musical objects and sound as there is in the vein of popular music. Underlying the instruments and music itself is also a wealth of secondary material, for any history of twentieth-century popular music must refer to the technology which

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[216]'Introduction', *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert & Susan McCarthy, p.xv.

shaped it - the changing forces of production, recording and broadcasting. For both contemporary popular and classical music, electric and electronic instruments have had the biggest impact upon the history of musical instruments during the past century, both in the design of instruments and in the possibilities of sound that may be created.[217] The electric organ and the synthesiser are equally a part of music's heritage; and it would be possible to imagine the interest electronic instruments such as the *ondes martenot* and *theremin* would hold for a museum visitor, with such instruments, incidentally, being excellently suited to 'Science and Music" displays to demonstrate how sound is created artificially.

> Another obvious priority is to make available to the musical public the means of understanding significant music of all traditions and cultures.[218]

It may be surmised that museums have actively collected historic musical instruments of the past, whilst ceasing to collect for the history of tomorrow. A museum can only interpret what it has, and this is overpoweringly of classical Western Art Music, a situation that is unlikely to change:

> A representative collection of musical instruments from regional cultures world-wide, even restricted to presenting present-day specimens would fill a large museum. To trace the historical development of instruments world-wide would be even more ambitious, especially as in many cultures musical instruments are regarded as ephemeral, easily replaced and are not made to last. High demands would be made on curatorial expertise in ethnomusicology and conservation. This division of the [Edinburgh

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[217]The recent acquisition of an electric guitar by the Horniman Museum(1994), is an encouraging exception to the lack of collected electric musical instruments in the academic museums.

[218]*Musicology in the 1980s* ed. Holoman & Palisca, (1982) p.29.

> University] collection does, however, include relatively historic (C19th) items, and a fair sample of the types of instruments used world-wide.[219]

The field of ethnomusicology may be an expanding one, but there are also concerns that museums in the United Kingdom have neglected indigenous music - our contemporary folk music - for the glamour of more seemingly 'exotic' material. There are numerous examples of local museums having collected indigenous 'folk' music (Gloucester Folk Museum's 'Frampton Volunteers' band music, for example), but it is invariably from a bygone age and it would, therefore, be historically and economically profitable to acquire more recently-made instruments and performed music to secure an on-going collection of musical material.[220] Certainly, by contrast with their classical counterparts, many non-Western instruments have benefited from their unfamiliar nature by having more emphasis placed upon their *context*, in order to give them meaning.

As part of this movement, some museums have become less concerned with music - or more correctly, with musical instruments - than with attempting to see the subject within an anthropological framework. A musical work (or instrument) is not understood in isolation but in context, and any truly musical analysis of a musical subject should be inspired by an awareness of the circumstances that shaped it. It is worrying, therefore, that *Museums of Music* adopts a rather defeatist attitude towards the associated material (iconography, ephemera, recordings, instrument-making equipment and costume), which invariably helps to place musical instruments within their context.

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[219]Letter from Arnold Myers, Curator, Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments.

[220]For example, the Gemeente Museum in the Netherlands has a policy of acquiring twentieth-century developments in instrument-making. See *Museums of Music*, p.11.

> A certain amount of musical material forms part of other non-musical collections (for example, within the theatre and opera archives of the Victoria and Albert Museum theatre collections). However, as such collections rarely differentiate between their specialist musical holdings, it is usually difficult or impossible to access what value it has as a resource for the study of music.[221]

Nevertheless, it would surely be feasible in a computer-organised museum environment where the reciprocal use of material is ever-more prolific and valued, to compile lists of musical-associated material as a resource for musical museums and others to draw upon. Silent instrument collections, especially, are desperately in need of supporting evidence to create for them the sense of musicality that is largely missing at present.

Music - The Elusive Subject

It is plain that music museums' subject matter places before them areas of difficulty, much of which the museums themselves are now attempting to identify and take to task. However, what museums do not appear to have asked themselves is precisely *why* music is so problematic when presented as a subject in a museological setting; what makes the subject unique; and how might the museums improve or change their perception of the musical subject? Collections of 'musical instruments' may be just that, but inherent in them is musical sound and performance; it is no longer adequate to treat the musical instrument simply as an interesting object.

It is arguable that the best way to raise the status of our musical collections is by attracting more visitors to them. At present, only a few of the major museums

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[221] *Museums of Music*, p.14.

have succeeded in attracting a healthy and broad-based audience, and perhaps in response to this, one of the *Museums of Music* 'Recommendations' is that '...efforts are made to extend the access of musical collections to a greater audience through the introduction of modern interpretative techniques.'[222] (It is also telling here, that the concern is now to improve access to musical *collections* rather than to musical *instruments*.) To accomplish this, a change of attitude is required towards policies on acquisition, display and interpretation, though without compromising the established ideals and ethics governing museum standards.

In an ever-more hands-on, spontaneous and audio-visual museum age, the public are obviously disappointed by museums displaying musical items in a silent, untouchable and uncreative way. Paradoxically, a situation has arisen where the majority of the public are musically 'ignorant' regarding the type of musical instruments most of our museums contain (unless this is in terms of the *music* they make), whilst being simultaneously much better informed and educated about *contemporary* music than the museums of music *give the impression* of being. The fact that many individuals have a prejudiced vision of music - either the dull school-museum kind of music that exists to be studied, or the populist kind you choose to listen to for pleasure, further complicates the situation. Regardless of how true it is, many people still think of music as an elitist subject, a belief that is sometimes substantiated by the museum profession. Curators need to have instilled into them the fact that people listen to music *avidly*; it is an important part of most people's lives. In response to this, there is a pressing need to rid music museums of their current image, even if this may require some drastic and populist steps in order to secure attention along the way.

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[222] *Ibid.*, p.83.

The nature of music is such that it will always be elusive, when it is presented in an object-only context. Its transitory and non-visual subject matter is museologically evasive and yet it would appear that many other genres of museums having comparable difficulties seem to be more successful in interpreting their subject in a comprehensive way and of attracting a larger audience than do their musical counterparts. Although, at first glance, these other museum genres extensibly have little in common with music as a subject, music museums can learn much from their approaches towards 'difficult' subject matter. Above all, these museums have been successful in de-mystifying the object and seeing it as a component of a grander scheme: As, for example, the Museum of the Moving Image starts with the premise that people *watch* and *participate*, so music museums should begin with the premise that people *listen*..

Balnain House

Of all the musical case-studies examined in this work, Balnain House, Inverness, is the most curious. It is discussed at this point in the narrative because it is a seminal case; it is, in effect, a museum of music *without* objects - the very antithesis of normal museum practice. Balnain House does not claim to be a museum in any technical sense, but it is important to be considered here because of its attempt to realise its musical subject matter in a comprehensive way. It is, as it describes itself, '... a resource centre for Highland music, dedicated to preserving and promoting Scots music.'[223] Housed in a beautifully restored eighteenth-century building, its four floors contain an exhibition area, library, archive, performance facilities (where classes are held), a cafe and a 'musicians'

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[223]*Balnain House Brochure*, (1994). Balnain House (opened March 1993), was established by Trust to increase awareness of Highland music and to bring visitors to Inverness. In its first year, the Tourist Board anticipated 65,000 visitors of which only 5,000 materialised. This was put down to a lack of publicity and general awareness about it as a new visitor attraction. (Information supplied by Lucy Conway, Manager, Balnain House, 1994.)

shop. The focus is such a specific one that these independent facilities work reciprocally, and seem to fuse into presenting a unified picture of 'Highland music' for the visitor rather than a series of semi-autonomous parts.

The Exhibition Area

In a reversal of expected exhibition procedure, Balnain House traces the past two-thousand years of Highland music through its *sound* .[224] The exhibition is divided between two well-spaced rooms, each containing two listening area 'carousels': each of these circular booths has eighteen head-sets attached to it (six for each of its three sections), and a choice of between usually seven to ten tracks that are accessed by the visitor,[225] and which correlate to numbers on the text and illustrations contained on the concave face of the carousel. Thus, there is facility for up to seventy-two people to each be listening to a part of the exhibition at the same time. (Stools to perch upon are also provided in the listening areas.) The concave listening areas are particularly effective, sheltering the visitor from other listeners around the rest of the carousel, and creating the impression of being cosily surrounded by the music and text, thus aiding concentration. The visual input in these concave panels usually takes the form of either a single large atmospheric background picture, or a series of direct illustrations; for example, early music is suggested through Celtic art - the 'Book of Kells' - the implied association of words and image creating both a *musical context* and a *visual focus,* whilst listening.

The story of Highland music is told chronologically, with each section of a carousel devoted to a specific musical period or aspect ('Pre-historic Origins',

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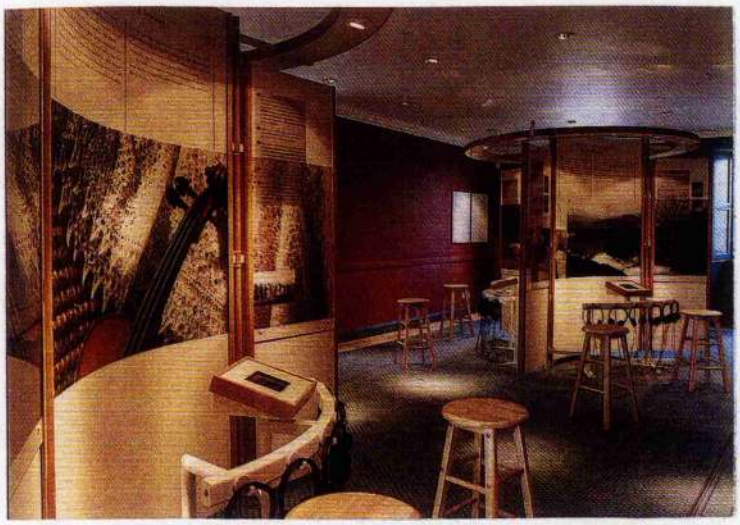
[224]The 'Exhibition Gallery' cost £350,000.

[225]The head-set works by the visitor depressing a small switch which cuts it on or off from the CD system. It is, therefore, possible to interrupt what you are listening to and to change tracks rather than having to listen to a chosen track for its duration.



Balnain House: The carousels of the Exhibition Area, tracing aurally two-thousand years of Highland Music.

(Reproduced courtesy of *Balnain House*.)

'The Coming of Christianity', 'The Heroic Tradition'), and illustrated aurally and visually by examples. The overall tone of the text is social-historical and the musical analysis is restricted to easily recognisable language. For example, a typical entry would be:

> *Iabel Oran na Comhachaig - Song of the Owl*
>
> Composed early seventeenth-century by Donald McDonald of Lochaber. He, old and starving identified himself with the owl he hears in the night. It was recorded by Angus MacLellan of South Uist when he was 96. The style of the poem, the tune and its delivery are old too, for the poem's syllables, the tune narrow in range, pentatonic in mode and its rhythms are unstressed.
>
> [From section on 'Flowering of the Aural Tradition.][226]

Where the terminology is more musically complex, this is always explained to the visitor through its *sound* . In the case of the section on 'Bagpipe Music', the pentatonic scale to which the bagpipes is tuned is explained through text and also in a narrative via the head-sets, so that the differences may be *listened* to. Set down in text -

Pipes on G Do Ray Me So La Do

Pipes on A Different pentatonic scale

Pipes on D 3rd pentatonic scale in a different mode for tonic - and high Do drops down the octave.

It is easy to see why it is more effective for the layman to *listen* to the differences than to appreciate them through text alone. The head-set compares the scale types by playing them in succession, after their initial individual performances. The characteristic grace notes and ornamentation found in pipe music is also explained

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[226]Balnain House, display label, 1994.

(pipe notes cannot be repeated without a different note occurring between them), though not the physical properties of the instrument which necessitates this.

In addition to the carousels, there are two audio-visual programmes[227] in the exhibition gallery (one in each room), providing a more general and documentary-style outline of Scottish music through narrative, and relating the music to Scottish images, landscape and poetry. Called simply 'Highland Music', this places much of the music heard in the carousels into a more detailed social and historical context, in showing for example, how the Scottish countryside relates to particular lifestyles, and of the people's everyday concerns from which the music itself frequently grew. The inclusion of audio-visual material also provides visitors with the opportunity to see musical instruments being played - the harp and bagpipes; the music sung[228] as *Port a Beul* ('Mouth Music'); and danced to in traditional Reels and Strathspays by 'Scottish Country Dancers'. The social history of individual instruments is focused upon in a manner that is quite different from the usual approach found in a music museum; as when describing the development of the harp from nature as 'The Tree of Strings', an instrument which, in past times, could never be played by a manual worker, because the harp's wire strings had to be plucked by long fingernails. The audio-visual facility also means that moving *images* may be used to reinforce the narrative; for example, where it is pointed out that the peculiarly distinctive rhythms found in old Scots music were inspired by the everyday sounds of water and wind, and

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[227]Presented by the Scottish music expert John Purser, this is a twenty-minute documentary made with the support of the National Museums of Scotland and Edinburgh University School of Scottish Studies.

[228]In general, vocal music is an area neglected by music museums. Although the human voice is probably the most versatile and prolific 'musical instrument' of all, it does not, for obvious reasons, fit neatly into any material collection. Sound Archives are a notable exception. Curiously, when referred to in a museum setting, vocal music is more likely to be placed within a context (for example, as 'Opera') in order to give it relevance. The discussion of vocal music as music in its own right is, therefore, unusual.

activities such as rowing and spinning, creating patterns and rhythms of movement.

The musical history described in this gallery further deviates from usual museum practice in bringing the story of Highland music into the 1990s. In a section entitled 'The Tradition Lives', contemporary musicians in the fields of rock, folk and 'classical' Scots music are discussed in terms of their highland music ancestry, and its inspiration for them as they seek either to continue or to re-interpret it. Popular-styled groups such as *Capercaille* and *Runrig* are compared with the more traditional vocal tradition of Calum Ruadh, a Skye poet and the near-cliched 'Scottishness' of the popularity of the Pipe Band.

The overall look of the exhibition is clear and spacious; only a handful of text-panels appear on the walls, but these are distinctive in going into greater detail and more specific musical terms than their audio-visual neighbours. For example, the 'Origins of Highland Song' panel explains and identifies its four structural categories as: 1) Songs in Syllabic Metres, 2) Strophic Metres - two lines and two strong stresses, 3) Metres with generic name of song, and 4) Choral Song. Clearly, these textual sections were aimed at a more informed audience, the combined input of the carousels, audio-visual programmes and wall texts enabling the exhibition to be enjoyed on several different levels of interest and previous knowledge.

In a passageway area, situated between the two main exhibition rooms, are contained the exhibition's only musical instrument exhibits. However, even these do not fall into the traditional museum mould, for they are contemporary examples of older instruments, provided as hands-on instruments, through which visitors can explore the feel and sound of some of the instruments they have learnt about in the exhibition. Included here are both a reproduction Triangular Mediaeval Harp

and Renaissance *clarsach*, (with the suggestion that the visitor runs his fingers over the strings to hear their differences in tuning); as well as a set of bagpipes, a chanter and a penny whistle. Most visitors do take the opportunity to try their hand at one or another of these instruments; and are often heard to discuss the sound *with reference* to the exhibition, thereafter.

As a 'resource centre', the proper function of Balnain House is the appreciation and propagation of Highland music through listening and performance. Indeed, it is not possible to go through the building without being acutely aware of musical sound as an activity, be it the workshops and lessons given in playing the bagpipes, violin or *bodhran* (much of which can be heard coming from the rooms above the exhibition gallery), or the impromptu live music performed by tutors and pupils in the cafe. This could be interpreted as 'compensation' for the lack of actual instrumental exhibits, yet at no point in the exhibition is the impression given that Balnain House is 'lacking' because of the absence of a material collection. The decision to present Highland music principally through *sound* rather than as a traditional collection of objects and text was chosen, not only because it seemed an obvious way in which to present musical history, but because the exhibition was designed from scratch and did not have an existing material collection to employ. Further, it was felt that historic Scottish instruments themselves were already well represented in existing museums and that the need to collect such for Balnain House was, therefore, both unnecessary and uneconomic. The 'Exhibition Gallery' would like to acquire more instruments in time,[229] but these would be for hands-on use: musical instruments within the exhibition have to be seen in a *practical* light; an ideal that

[229]As dictated by finances. Musical instruments are expensive items and two violins have already been stolen from the 'hands-on' area since the exhibition opened.

is apparently highly successful, with a record number of people being prompted to take-up an instrument as a direct result of visiting Balnain House.[230]

Balnain House proves that it is possible to present successfully a musical subject *in the manner of a museum* without being solely dependent upon objects. It is interesting to note that, in general, visitors paid closer attention to the exhibition - or returned to it - after being exposed to live musical performance occurring elsewhere in the building during their visit. Throughout, musical instruments are seen in their context as tools employed by a *performer* in order to facilitate musical *sound* ; and it is to this that visitors respond, both by listening and observing, or by trying for themselves the practical elements of music making. The traditional music museum, existing because of a collection of artefacts is, of course, not able to interpret itself in the same way as Balnain House because it is bound to its material objects, but it can and should, nonetheless, use examples such as Balnain House to see how its re-evaluation of music as an active, creative pursuit of past and present can unshackle it from a frozen, object-centred approach in favour of a more intrinsically musical one.

[230]This is in terms of visitors who subsequently book lessons and purchase instruments through Balnain House. (Based on information supplied by Lucy Conway, Manager, Balnain House, 1994.)

CHAPTER 6

PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM: STATIC AND MOVING IMAGES IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

Having considered the difficulties inherent in presenting 'music' as a subject in a museological context, the purpose of this chapter is to examine how museums approach static and moving media in the examples of still photography and moving film: how does the presentation of a museum subject change when that subject matter has an active and transitory aspect to contend with? In order to answer this, two different types of photographic collection were chosen, 'The Waking Dream' and the British Photographic Museum (static, object-centred and of a more 'traditional' museum presentation), to be compared with a cinematic collection, the Museum of the Moving Image, (concerned with movement, more conceptually based and using modern interpretative techniques). From this discussion, it will become apparent that there are parallels in the perception and articulation of photograph and film collections with those of music collections, in that photography is taken to be an 'Art', and can be equated to the traditional-academic standing of 'classical' music collections, whereas, film is seen as 'Entertainment' and may be equated to popular musical material. The *static* photographic image is treated in a quite easily discernible way, for, like a musical instrument, it often appears to be 'historic', (with all of the implications of status, 'seriousness' and worth that this confers), and, like an historic musical instrument, the older a photograph is, the more venerable it is thought to be. Cinematic film - and popular music - are parts of a seemingly far more modern epoch, and are therefore afforded a brasher, brighter approach. As with musical instruments, the photograph collection (a frozen subject) is object-based, while music, in its *practical* sense (a passing created performance), is mirrored in the cinematic. Museums dealing with film are further distinguished by being a relatively recent

phenomenon in museum genre; the antithesis of the 'antique' museum, their principal collections span only the last hundred years.[231] Unlike music museums, however, most of which have their roots in pre-existing musicological collections, film museums have been created *deliberately* in response to a growing market of interest; and it is this which has shaped their subsequent development.

Clearly, the difference in the nature and treatment of the photograph and film media is the telling factor in the overwhelming popularity of the latter, shown through the public's awareness of these museums, and in their attendance figures. It is, therefore, vital to understand what makes such museums so popular; and it will be argued that it is principally due to their focus on activity, movement and value as entertainment, *whilst remaining true to the subject they are presenting*. Music has the same potential qualities as film within the museum environment, but at present they remain largely unrealised. The answer to this lies perhaps not in looking at why music museums are 'unpopular', but why many of these other 'problematic' genre are so successful in comparison in overcoming their difficulties: what are they doing that is right, and is it possible to re-apply the same principle or ideas onto the musical genre? This is, of course, not to say that *all* photography and film collections are popular (when compared with musical ones), and so consideration will also be given to the less successful collections of this type.[232]

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[231]Quite literally, as 1995 marks the official one-hundredth anniversary of the invention of cinematography.

[232]A cross-section of 'successful' and 'less successful' museums was found in the questionnaires received from a further eighteen museums, having photography or film collections. Of these, the subject of photography or film was the topic of the whole museum in nine examples, and a department or a minor part in the other nine. Most of the museums chose a chronological approach when dealing with the history of a collection, but a thematic one, if the material was limited or concerned with an individual - for example at Kingston Museum (display on cinema pioneer Edweard Muybridge) and the Fox Talbot Museum.

'The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century'

> In photographs, we believe the transient has been perfectly embalmed, the fleeting preserved as though in amber.[233]

Photography is the epitome of the visual image. From the start, the title of this exhibition 'Was it a vision or a waking dream?'[234] invited the visitor to look at the material in many senses *other* than the purely photographic. The viewer was required to think not just about the photographs themselves, but about the photographer as *protagonist*; how he or she focused their ideas - literally 'taking their vision' - to bring their personal expression and subject matter together, to create a *poetic* reality.

The exhibition, held in the City Art Centre, Edinburgh,[235] presented two-hundred and fifty photographs of c.1835-1936 from the archives of the Gilman Photographic Company[236] - of special importance because these were the original prints, rather than modern prints taken from old negatives. The exhibition was laid out over three levels of the gallery, using very subdued lighting and plain white mounts throughout, each room being further divided into smaller sections by the use of screens. The resulting space was therefore confined, helping to create an atmosphere congenial to concentrating on the details of each photograph. All items were wall or screen mounted with the exception of some material in album form and a small number of colour daguerreotypes. Each section of this thematically arranged display was provided with a master label explaining the history and aesthetic impact of each theme; and each photograph was given its

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[233]Frank Whitford, 'Focus on the Past' [on 'The Waking Dream'], *The Sunday Times*, 29.8.93.
[234]From John Keates' *Ode to a Nightingale.*
[235]The exhibition ran from 7 August - 2 October 1993.
[236]Reputedly the greatest privately held collection of photography in the world. Housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, curator Marie Morris.

author, date and title and, if necessary, a brief commentary upon specific historical, technical or artistic interest.

It was in this respect that the exhibition differed from that of a musical collection, where usually only *one* aspect - most often the historical or technical - is concentrated upon and shapes how the collection is viewed accordingly. 'The Waking Dream', however, tackled the subject of photography on three levels: First, in the purely photographic - the history of photography and its technical processes - told through sections devoted to its national pioneers in Britain, France and America; secondly, in a thematic social-historical account, examining the subject matter of the portrait, landscape and architectural photographic genres, observing where the photographers travelled and what interested them to photograph; and thirdly, in the aesthetic interpretation of Photography as Art, as, literally a 'Waking Dream', and the concept by which images from life and motion could be captured. This last aspect dealt with the discovery of a new art form and the excitement caused by the ability to represent *movement* (while painting and sculpture remained static representations of life).

Photography is the precursor of cinema and television and all forms of moving film. However, the art of photography, the 'mirror with a memory', can become little more than a collection of old photographs, if it is not placed within its context; for although these photographs captured a moment from real life, they still retained a static quality, not only because of the length of exposure time required, but also because of the inherent stillness of portraiture, still life and painterly composition, emulated by many of these early photographers. It is common to think of photographic exhibitions in an art gallery setting (as opposed to a 'museum'), as a number of 'flat' two-dimensional objects, but here, because the medium is *film* (suspended animation and therefore somehow tangible), it is possible to view it in a less object-based way. The photograph may be a passive form of film, but, like

musical material, activity is *implied* and so should be presented to the visitor in a suitably creative light.

> It suggests perhaps more cogently than others, that though photographs must always be of 'subjects', they can, in effect, also become facts in their own right - without demeaning whatever has been invited through the lens or whatever surprises it brings with it. Thus the best photographs are more about the 'being' of things, people and scenes than their 'likeness', or 'composition', and to achieve this priority, photography had to contrive its own pictorial unity.[237]

Like film, still photography is a reproductive medium where the image is always constant. It is in this respect that it differs from the creation of music or drama, where repeated performances can never be exactly duplicated.[238] Musical interpretation has the capability to be infinitely variable, but film and photography are finite entities, and this may, in part, account for their success when presented as a museum subject: Film is constant and therefore more concrete - like a painting or a sculpture - as a created item, but music is spontaneous and pliable, and as such is a far more daunting task for a museum to encapsulate and present. 'The Waking Dream' was, nevertheless, successful in putting across a sense of the *creative process* behind its photographic images. Understanding that the image is a *creative effort* on the part of the photographer, shapes the way in which the audience views, appreciates and interprets the photographs for themselves. This could be seen, for example, in Fox Talbot's stylised 1840 photograph of trees and their reflection in water, which was clearly a *photographic* image rather than a painterly one, the subject chosen through the eyes of the camera.

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[237]Bruce Bernard, 'Photographic Pioneers' [on 'The Waking Dream'], *The Daily Telegraph Magazine*, pp.39-42.
[238]With the obvious exception of recorded representations.

The inclusion of photographs which did more than simply reproduce reality, further demonstrated the development of photography as an individual art form. The idea that 'the camera never lies' is proven to be, from the start, a patent fallacy, as the early photographers manipulated the subject matter, the use of light, the technical foibles of the camera and the processes of reproducing its images, to both enhance the picture and deceive the viewer. The portraiture illustrating scenes from Shakespeare, by Julia Margaret Cameron for example, showed a controlled use of light to create atmosphere and effect rather than photographic realism.

The portrayal of music in museums concentrates, in the main, upon either the biographical detail of composers or the technical development of instruments. The photographic medium, by contrast, would appear to be capable of being presented in several other guises. 'The Waking Dream' considered early photographs in an art-historical light - though still with a keen eye on the creative process - and this should perhaps be briefly compared with a totally 'active' interpretation of the subject as practical photography, from the same era: The R.Clapperton Daylight Photographic Studio in Selkirk.[239]

A Working Museum

The Clapperton Studio, (opened to the public in 1989) is an independent concern, its displays aimed at much the same clientele as 'The Waking Dream': photographic enthusiasts and the interested general public. It differs, though, in being *practically* biased, so that visitors 'Experience a step back in time [at] one of Scotland's oldest photographic businesses with an original Daylight Photographic Studio'.[240] The Studio has existed as a family firm since 1867 and is set up as a

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[239]A similar example will soon be found in the Welsh Folk Museum, Cardiff, which has laid the foundations for a Victorian photographic studio wherein visitors can dress in clothes of that period and have their picture taken by a professional photographer. The project is being sponsored by the film company *Agfa*. (*The Museums Journal*, November 1994, p.8)

[240]Leaflet, the R. Clapperton Daylight Photographic Studio,(1994).

working museum and photographic archive (curated by family descendants) with the aim of showing what it was like to visit a professional photographic studio at the turn of the century. Guided tours are provided, treating each group of visitors separately by targeting the areas of the Studio they are likely to be most interested in; although within this system the curator believes that 'Each visitor finds a different interpretation from what is presented to them in the museum',[241] depending on their own previous experience of taking, and sitting for, photographs. Although both the cameras and negatives displayed are static, the creative process of photography is discovered through demonstrations of how the early black and white photographs were developed in the (original) darkroom, with the equipment being used as necessary. The idea of live demonstration has been a central part of the museum and archive's work since the opening of the Studio; it is used as a springboard to discussion on areas such as camera equipment, photographic processes, photographic chemistry and the social impact of studio photography. Throughout, it is stressed that photography is a *practical art*; the demonstrations place in context the still photograph displays by providing them with a creative past.

The British Photographic Museum

The parallels between the presentation of musical instruments and photographic equipment, are most clearly demonstrated when the criterion is the importance of the material as physical objects. The object-rich British Photographic Museum[242] at Totnes in Devon is such a case, and is included here for the unfortunate reason that it exhibits many of the worst excesses and attributes of such an approach: regardless of the undisputed quality and quantity of its

[241] Letter from Ian W.Mitchell, owner and curator, 27.1.94.
[242] A private collection owned by Christopher Peterson. Opened in 1987, to date 1993 has been their busiest year.

artefacts, the visitor departs with little sense of photography as a creative hobby, art form or industry.

The museum houses still and moving picture photographic equipment from c.1875-1960, consisting of some twenty-thousand items, of which about two-thirds are always in permanent store. The exhibition is dispersed over two rooms using the 'old-fashioned' type of glass display case, and within these the approach is both chronological and thematic as dictated by the material - and sometimes, it would appear, by the amount of display space available. No guidebook was available, but a checklist containing brief comments on the eighty-one display cases was supplied upon request. No master labels were used and the labelling within the cases themselves proved erratic (some had no labels at all, others an overly lengthy script) and was often hand-written, making it difficult to read. The labelling was also selective (the cases being so cramped that it would have been a physical impossibility to have labelled every item), and this sometimes caused confusion as to which item was being referred to. In the few thematic 'room displays' (for example, a darkroom of the Edwardian period), the contents were left to 'speak for themselves'.

As with academic-historical music collections, this is a museum for the specialist and enthusiast, who arrives with the fore-knowledge of what things are and what to look out for.[243] The thematic displays within this broadly chronological framework (at one point returning to the 1880s from the 1940s, for no apparent reason), give the impression of occurring simply as a way to display a large body of related material at once; a situation further confused by the lack of labels and general overcrowding. The tone of the labels was technical-historical in content - as with the approach to most musical instrument collections - but there was little

[243]I was fortunate to visit this museum in the company of a professional photographer who was able to describe the exhibits and place them in a context for me.

attempt to place photography in any social context, even when the material might suggest it: for example, the 'Electric Theatre Bioscope' room setting, a small reproduction of a nineteenth-century cinema, replete with sixteen original cinema seats and a 'silver screen', hand-worked projector and a number of (poor quality) models in period dress. In general, a far greater use of associated material was also needed to off-set the endless cases of camera machinery. The few posters used as background material in the display on 'Cinema' gave a visible 'lift' to the display, by furnishing it with a sense of time and place; it acted as a rare illustration that the cameras in the case existed with this *active* cinematic purpose.

In an exhibition full of inconsistencies, any material which was well-displayed, immediately stood-out from the overall confusion in showing flashes of imagination. Thus, the narrative 'captions' for a display on Les Allen, a British pioneer of animated cartoons, was written in the literary style and visual graphics of an over-the-top film trailer, with over-emphasis, underlining and cliched comments to suit the animated medium and catch the eye. Some of the other displays worked well when the material was thematic and complete within itself, as in 'The History of Agfa Film', where the artefacts and history were comprehensive and finite. Also, the use of more simple explanations (as opposed to a mass of technical detail) were a distinct improvement; for example in discussing how, before colour negatives or positive film were invented, the only way to achieve a colour photograph was to tint it by hand - the display showed these boxes of tints and dyes, alongside examples of the photographs.

It was when the museum moved into the realm of moving pictures that the lack of any live film was most sorely missed. It was not within the scope or technical prowess of the museum to include this in the exhibition area itself, although, curiously, an impromptu 'film theatre' had been established in the museum's cafe, showing a daily film show. Visitors were, therefore, unfortunately dependent

upon luck, in coinciding their visit time-wise with one of these showings; for the rest, the cinematic equipment in the museum itself remained resolutely dead. Despite this, the museum's receptionist claimed that many visitors thought this collection to be superior to that found at the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, and undoubtedly, the scale and comprehensiveness of its material is staggering in an establishment so small: however - as with many musical collections - volume should not be made a substitute for good display. At best, the general interest visitor departs with a feeling for the paraphernalia that goes to make up the photographic medium; the expert is fascinated, and the photographic novice thoroughly confused, and probably bored. The maxim that 'less is more' ought to be applied. The notion that this is the *British* Photographic Museum implies a far more professional and systematic style of museum than exists at present. Though the museum does have an extensive archive of books and catalogues on early photography and cameras, it is its exhibition - its public face - which lets it down.

Conclusion

If, then, interpretation is all, is it still possible to have a contextual philosophy of photography when it is, in practice, a practical art? The collection belonging to the Royal Photographic Society in Bath would appear to indicate that this is possible; that although active movement is not integral to photographs in a *literal* sense, it may still be implied through other means - even in museum surroundings. Perhaps because the Royal Photographic Society collection is predominantly that of *images* rather than equipment,[244] its outlook is concerned with *creativity*, the very opposite of the British Photographic Museum's case, where equipment swamps the camera's proper function and outcome. The ideology behind the Royal Photographic Society's collection is different. It begins with an examination of the basics of the art, 'As photography has spiralled off in so many

[244]It holds over 100,000 photographic images and 6,000 items of photographic equipment.

directions, so the bedrock of the past becomes increasingly relevant',[245] and is quick to state that the subject is a new one both in scientific and museum terms: it is only really in the past twenty years or so that the full possibilities of interpreting the subject have begun to be realised. In addition, there is also an awareness that 'serious' photography, like 'serious' music, has an elitist tag and that '...this asset [photography] should be made available to as wide a public as possible in as many ways as possible'.[246] In the past, the display of photographic collections mirrored that of some musical collections today, in being split into a variety of physical and theoretical groups, presenting the material as 'image', 'object' or 'words'. However, regardless of how convenient and appropriate these categories were and are, a re-evaluation of the material is required to re-invest it with a sense of purpose and craftsmanship. Such has been the case at the Royal Photographic Society: 'Whilst these areas may have to be stored physically separately, it has been my increasing concern ... to reunite them in an intellectual, relevant and interpretative way.'[247] It would appear from this methodology, that the more 'difficult' the subject, the more comprehensive is the interpretative treatment needed in order to make it a success. Music, of course, has a further dimension to consider in its aural side, but in comparison as a subject, it often appears afraid even to *attempt* to interpret itself as broadly as photography - especially in this instance - has done. Music is guilty of placing its components into neatly defined compartments, while other museum genres have been cross-referencing and re-integrating their material:

> The end product, the photograph, cannot come into being without the impact of some mechanical, chemical or electronic means of production, nor without the input of some form of intelligence, human or otherwise.

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[245]Pam Roberts, [curator] *An Account of The Royal Photographic Society Collection*,(1994), p.1.
[246]*Ibid.*
[247]*Ibid.*,p.3.

> By research, by interpretation, by connecting these elements together, we can make an entity which tells us more about all these elements than any one of them in isolation. Thus, our knowledge, our understanding, our appreciation, our enthusiasm and excitement grows.[248]

A further pointer for music collections is the Society's belief in never underestimating the commonplace; it is, they argue, through amateur photography that most people's interest in the art is kindled: holiday snaps, in their own way, are of as much importance as Fox Talbot originals; just as song-sheets should be collected as avidly as Mozart autograph scores. However, by contrast, photographic collections tend to have on-going acquisition policies, and do not give the impression of being interested in, and inspired by only the historic or rare. The Royal Photographic Society collection boasts the latest (1994) autofocus 'Olympus AZ-330 Superzoom' camera, and even the poorly executed British Photographic Museum included examples of cameras from the 1960s. Such photographic collections are adamantly moving with the times, the Royal Photographic Society reacting against its interpretative past when it '... emphasised technical rather than aesthetic advances, with examples of the progression in camera design exhibited alone instead of any attempt to link this design and photographic output as a symbiotic whole.'[249] The new approach succeeds - as did 'The Waking Dream' - in being unafraid to combine the aesthetic and the technical, while music museums appear to polarise these two concerns, producing less satisfactory results.

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[248] *Ibid.*
[249] *Ibid.*, p.4.

Film, Cinema and Television: Moving Images

There are many parallels between the presentation of film and of music. Music has always been a part of film and its images,[250] (where even in the misnamed 'silent' cinema, there was always musical accompaniment),[251] and is a potent force in the creation and marketing of films today. Indeed, with pleasing irony - now that most popular music has to have accompanying images in order to sell it - the idea has come full circle.

Further similarities may be found between the process of listening to music at a concert and watching a film, for both are aural and visual experiences and are inextricably linked for someone experiencing a 'performance'. Vision in musical performance is still a major consideration in the texture of instruments, costumes and movement of the musicians (and also that of the audience itself), combining to provide continuous interest and visual stimulation. Music itself may be termed 'invisible movement', but combined with performance it becomes *literal* visual movement as well. Even when it is not necessary to be able to *see* an activity, the ability to do so is often a major factor in the enjoyment (and more importantly, the *understanding*) of the whole process.[252] In this way, people will try to sit on the side of the concert hall where they can see the pianist's hands; it makes no difference to the actual *sound* they are hearing, but improves the quality of their visit to that concert. Music is indeed '...not the auditory analogue of the art of pictorial representation' but is '... the art of sounds that are not given a non-

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[250]Even the showing of the Lumiere Brothers first film (in 1896)used a piano improvising on popular song melodies as an accompaniment.

[251]In comparison with other museum subjects, museums with cinema material appear to show a marked preference for using background music in their display, especially when accompanying showings of silent films. These include: the Laurel and Hardy Museum, Holmforth Postcard Museum, Jersey Museum and the Leeds Industrial Museum.

[252]Like music, this is also so with sport, with most people preferring to watch it 'live' rather than in an edited or 'restricted'(radio not television)version.

auditory interpretation.'[253] and can exist in their own right. A museum, however, requires the *physical* presence of the subject; and it is from this that the difficulties described below arise.

Taken as a basic commodity, film differs from music in that it involves many different people, rather than a single artist or composer, in its initial stages. It is composite, requiring a far greater number of professionals in different fields - indeed up to two-hundred and forty-six different trades and professions may be brought into play in the making of a film.[254] Film is, most obviously a commercial undertaking and, like music, is an art form dependent upon public approval: it reflects what the public wants even within its creative targets. Film is especially important within the context of this thesis because it has become a key means of mass entertainment in the way that music, - that is the music that is represented in our museums - *used* to be. In recent times, the cinema (visiting) industry in Great Britain has undergone something of a renaissance;[255] and this is reflected in the consistently high numbers of visitors to the major cinematic museums compared with those of music. The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television and the Museum of the Moving Image were established partly in response to this burgeoning renewal of interest, and partly to help create it, both flourishing on a reciprocal basis with the cinema and television industries they support and are supported by. Unfortunately, there exists no parallel case for music.

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[253]Malcolm Budd, 'Preface', *Music and the Emotions: The Philosophical Theories*,(Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p.ix.
[254]Ernest Lindgreen, *The Art of Film*(London, 1950),p.5.
[255]After a prolonged period, when many cinemas were forced to close, the appearance of 'Multiplex' cinemas has heralded a change of trend. Cinema attendance in the United Kingdom rose from 53 million in 1985 (an average attendance per person of once a year) to 98 million in 1990. (Information supplied by 'United Cinemas International', 1992).

When comparing the two media of film and music in museum terms, film has the upper hand in that an individual is able to hold on to and recall to mind past *visual images* (even when they are transient as in film) more easily than he can remember past musical or aural ideas. Speech, compared to music, is different again, because it is seemingly more concrete and (when in our own language), is made-up of recognisable words to latch on to, making it memorable. Without repetition, so that the individual recognises and memorises sounds, music is less tangible and it is, therefore, somewhat paradoxical that, when 'All arts aspire to the condition of music',[256] music should be the most ethereal and frustrating of them all to pin down.

The Importance of Movement

> What has the film-maker to correspond to the colour and visual design of the painter, the solid masses of the sculptor, the musical sounds of the composer, and the word sounds and stresses of the writer and poet?[257]

Undoubtedly the answer to this is *movement*. Film is an art of manipulating movement (just as photographs are of capturing it) and controlling it, as opposed to the 'natural' movement of a theatrical performance, or a game of sport. In dealing with concepts of movement, however, it is difficult to describe active things objectively, when, as participants, we are removed from the action as it is taking place. Static images alone prove unsatisfactory: Reproducing a 'still' from a moving picture is akin to showing a page from a musical score, reducing its status to that of 'object' and reinforcing the notion that it is not possible to show movement actively. With film 'stills', or music, this results in the 'object' suffering a loss of impetus, unless the visitor already knows what it sounds like as

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[256]Schopenhaur.
[257]Ernest Lindgreen, *The Art of Film*, p.92.

music or looks like in action. Film, because it is visual, can at least always be recognised on that level, whereas, even the most dedicated admirer of Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* may not recognise it in its printed form. Similarly, a 'still' from a film offers only a single viewpoint of subject, lighting and duration; its expressive possibilities are severely limited when compared to its active state as moving film. A single musical page shows melody, harmony and choice of instruments at an isolated moment, but not its *expressive* qualities. The music is only brought to life through a succession of these moments - like film - through movement.

It is usual for museum displays dealing with 'film' to begin with some allusion to the cinematic art arising out of photography and optical experiments, resulting in the central idea of 'persistence of vision'. This is taken to be key to the appreciation of all subsequent developments, just as how we hear *should* be core to an understanding of any substantial collection of musical instruments. It is perhaps natural, when individuals are so conditioned to it, that sight should invariably predominate over hearing; and this is further exaggerated by film's visual supremacy. Indeed, in contrast with how we *view* things, the gift of *hearing* has been little explored and remains underestimated. It is possible to listen both *selectively* (to music, conversation) and *incidentally* (background music or speech), but the same duality does not exist for looking: viewing one thing excludes viewing another at the same time. With sound, however, it is possible to look at one thing while listening to something else, and it is in this respect, of *not* being visual, that sound is freer and potentially more versatile. Museums, traditionally, have employed images because they are *immediate* and easier to manipulate than sound or movement: it might well be said that society is 'visually biased'. Notions of the non-visual, though more complex, are a less tangible entity, but one that many museums now have the technical ability to include in their displays.

Music in itself, also has a long and prestigious association with cinematography, and as such is important to exhibitions dealing with film to show what it can add to an essentially visual medium. In the early days of the cinema, it was realised that silent film was rather 'flat' on its own, and that a musical accompaniment added a further dimension to it.[258] As film has its own sense of rhythm, both mechanically in its machinery and in the 'pace' of the story it is telling, so music helps and mirrors this. The simple reason behind the endless popularity of film soundtracks, has been because the listeners associate them with *memorable images* and for this reason alone music is, therefore, intrinsic to any museum display looking at the cinema. In the early days, music and film in combination seemed especially able to enhance the general mood - or even precisely mimic the movements - of whatever was depicted on the screen. At times, such was its efficiency in doing so, that many film directors of that era thought of 'music' and 'sound', to be more of a curse than a blessing:

> We thought the use of sound will deprive us of the necessity of invention. You see, when you didn't have the sound you had to invent something special to get the story, just through the visual medium.[259]

Nevertheless, regardless of the complexity of combining two artistic media, for a contemporary museum visitor sound and visual movement are inextricably linked when they think of film. Indeed, it might be said, that the partnership between film makers and composers has become the major art form of the twentieth century:

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[258]Over the past ten years the British Film Institute has been working to restore the experience of pre-talkie cinema by attempting to reunite films with their original accompanying music and by commissioning new scores from contemporary composers. Annette Morreau, 'The Reborn sounds of Silents', *The Guardian*,(18.3.93).

[259]Rene Clair, Film Director speaking on the early years of the cinema. Ian Christie 'Out of the Shadows', *BBC Radio Three*, (20.9.93).

> I think we in the music industry are becoming more conscious of the power of the audio-visual coupling - which is cinema - and its undeniable future in the next century and centuries beyond. It will be *the* art form; it will be *the* way we communicate. And as musicians, we have to realise that it will be part of our future, whether we like it or not.... A lot of musical purists would say that we shouldn't have visual distractions, but...what is undeniable is that the mixed-media is with us, as part of our lives as musicians - and will continue to be.[260]

A museological history of film cannot be taught through the visual medium alone: sound demands a 'necessity of invention', if the museum is to succeed in interpreting its filmic subject in its totality. The fragmented interpretation of 'music' is quite different. Museums, in the past, separated viewing and listening because it was the obvious thing to do - even if the subject was a musical one. Separating the facets into musical 'object' and musical 'sound' made the subject - superficially - an approachable one for museums and their visitors, though at the loss of what - in combination - made the subject unique and special. Any union of two such extreme concerns as the visual and the aural invariably complicates matters, but, as is described below, the problem is not an insurmountable one, even when these concerns are applied to material that is also transitory.

The Museum of The Moving Image

> Welcome to the Museum of the Moving Image and to the history, magic and technical wizardry of cinema and television. The most popular and influential media of the twentieth-century, MOMI celebrates their story on

[260]John Williams, composer, 'Listen to the Movies', *BBC Radio 4*.

> both sides of the screen, tracing their development from the earliest days to the present day.[261]

The Museum of the Moving Image,[262] (opened in 1988), is situated in the sympathetic setting of London's 'South Bank' next to the National Film Theatre [263]with which it runs film seasons and tie-ins with its own material, through special exhibitions.[264] The museum's display is chronological in outline but thematic within this, sub-dividing its expansive and comprehensive history of the moving image into no less than fifty-two sections.[265] Information panels in the museum's foyer explain the aims of the museum and highlight any special events, for example, the films showing in their cinema during that week. Here, a panel also 'warns' visitors that they will meet characters in costume throughout the museum, and that these people are there to help bring the exhibits to life:

> Enjoy the thrill of participating in a Hollywood Screen Test or stand back and watch a Victorian magic lantern show - it is up to you how much you want to be involved.[266]

Entering into the participatory spirit of the museum is made easier by the attention to detail in the design of the exhibition sections. The distinctive use of certain

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[261]*The Museum of the Moving Image Souvenir Guidebook*, (MOMI, British Film Institute, 1994), p.1.
[262]Usually referred to by its acronym 'MOMI'.
[263]Both MOMI and the National Film Theatre are part of the self-supporting British Film Institute (founded 1933). The BFI's concerns include all aspects of film, television and video including production, distribution, exhibition, preservation and conservation, education, publishing and research.
[264]For example, the Special Exhibition for October 1993 - April 1994 was 'The Western: West of the Mississippi, North of the Rio Grande', a history juxtaposing artefacts, text and film clips to explain the historical reality of the 'Wild West' and its rise and fall as a cinematic genre.
[265]MOMI encompasses a massive volume of artefacts and information. Throughout the museum, a large text-panel featuring a 'Monty-Pythonesque' foot was used to list the various sections still to be visited, allowing the visitor to - literally - pace himself. (The foot becomes noticeably redder and more blistered as the visitor progresses!)
[266]MOMI introductory text-panel.

materials, architectural styles, colours and music, create an immediate atmosphere with which the visitor naturally empathises. In this way, the artefacts are always presented in an environment that is sympathetic to them: the visitor enters the museum proper (having purchased a 'cinema' ticket), via a sweeping 1930s-style Art Deco, black and chrome staircase, reminiscent of an Astaire-Rogers musical set; suddenly, changing to mahogany, dark red and gold for the section on cinema pioneers of the Victorian age.

Following the 'Yellow Brick Road' indicated by arrows on the floor, the visitor first encounters a model of a giant human eye, central to a display on early optical experiments. The structure of the eye - how we see - is explained in terms of how it parallels the camera: it is the starting-point for the way in which we respond to all movement; something that was pictorially suggested by a screen *inside* the eye, showing a montage of rapidly changing images from the realms of film and television. Adjoining this display, the basic principles behind the optical instruments (displayed in the usual fashion of object, picture and text), were then explained by describing how mirrors and lenses may be used to distort images. This section was typical of the whole museum, in keeping overtly technical information to a minimum and using understandable language: for the purposes of the museum, it is more important to learn about the basic *concepts*, (for example, that in the *Camera Obscura* light passing through a small hole into a darkened room, forms an image of the same outside), than to understand all the laws of physics governing them. Visitors were thus allowed space to focus on these ideas, because the objects - though plentiful - are not so prolific that they overwhelm the text. Artefacts were placed into a context with their immediate surroundings: key selected items were employed rather than an overabundance of material, so that the visitors looked at the item and its function in detail, and were concerned by the *story* of the moving image and not by a collection of 'things'. A camera may be a fascinating piece of technology in its own right, but it is what it

does that is important. A showcase of cameras is of significance only to the specialist, and, like a musical instrument, a camera cannot speak for itself but has to be interpreted in a functional light. Following this method, a section on 'Shadow Plays' (the earliest form of artificially created moving images), used a number of back-lit examples of shadow puppets, accompanied by a video of them in performance; while a realisation of the *Fantasmagorie* of the eighteenth-century, reconstructed a theatre in a church crypt with 'cut-out' figures watching and listening to the magic-lantern performance; the aim being to *recreate* what happened rather than use a passive explanation, which would have lost much of the atmosphere of the *Fantasmagorie* spectacle.

An exception to this - the using of large bodies of material *en masse* - was employed when the museum wished to show any cinematic ephemera; a subject suited to a less formal, more 'cluttered' look. A section on 'Hollywood', set out as a 'Casting Office', gained its impact from this irregular approach, whilst still retaining a contextual setting for its material in spite of its volume. Cigarette cards, publicity photographs and souvenirs of all types were displayed in 'shop-front' windows (or cleverly disguised traditional glass-fronted display cases), while copies of fan magazines littered a central table and a video screen showed clips of early films featuring the 'stars' of the surrounding paraphernalia. Aside from this, associated material (movie posters, advertisements) was used throughout the museum whenever background 'colour' was required, helping to create the right 'feel' of a particular time or style.

The idea of interactive and 'hands-on' material had a consistent presence throughout the museum. In an early section, a model of a small child watching the images move on a *Zoetrope* indicated the device's fascination and appeal as a form of home entertainment, while a modern 'hands-on' replica beside it appeared

to have much the same effect on the visitors witnessed trying it for themselves.[267] A number of *Mutoscopes* (popularly known as 'What the Butler Saw' machines), were also available for visitors to try, but here their entertainment value was balanced by a demonstration of their technological side, in showing a dismantled example to explain the inner workings.[268] 'Hands-on' was shown most literally in the 'Animation' section, where a resident artist[269] was available to teach children - and adults - how to design their own *Zoetrope* strips and then to try them; the personal input, here, acting as the equivalent of an instrument-maker or as an in-house performer would for a musical collection. In the background, a montage of film clips and music illustrated the 1930s 'Golden Age of Animation', with a further eight video screens tracing the history of animation using its cels and familiar characters to tell the story.

In the course of the museum, MOMI frequently plays with - and exploits - the notion of film *within* film, both in its concrete exhibition environment and in the idea of the museum making a 'performance' out of presenting the entertainment industry as a subject. In such a way, the *'Lumière Cinematographie'* section showed the Lumière s'earliest film in a thematic setting, so that it appeared that the theatre set *itself* was showing the film and not the 'museum'. This ability - to suspend the disbelief of the visitor - is central to a greater part of the museum's ideology; it succeeds in explaining the historical and the technical side of the subject, whilst still retaining the sense of illusion and image (imagination?) that is integral to the film medium, and to the visitors' fascination with it. Dealing with a

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[267]'Hands-on' replicas provide an excellent method of exploring how things work (and are likely to be attractive to visitors), but where this is not possible an 'exploded diagram' showing inner workings and explaining basic principles is a valid alternative. Kingston Museum, whose early cinema collection is small and text-based explains its Edweard Muybridge *Zoopraxiscope* in this manner. (Information supplied by Paul Hill, Collections Manager, Kingston Museum, 24.2.94.)

[268]The *Mutoscope* principle behind the illusion of movement (produced by a succession of gradually altered static images) is also found as a 'flick' figure kicking a ball, in the top corner of MOMI's *Souvenir Guidebook*, (MOMI, BFI,1992).

[269]The museum's team of animators are recent graduates, sponsored for MOMI by Channel 4 Television.

subject as ethereal as *the moving image,* MOMI constantly contrasts the idea of creation and illusion through depicting *both* aspects in their displays: for example, when examining the 'Documentary Film', a large cinema screen showed scenes of important events taken by the Pathe News, in the set-display of a mini-theatre, to emulate cinema-style viewing, presenting the 'illusion'. Behind this 'cinema' was a further room containing the camera equipment working in order to project those cinema images; the visitor, therefore, also sees the *creation* of that illusion; the public and private face of the film, one related to the other. 'Being part of the illusion' in MOMI is a basic fact, not just something reserved for the 'special effects' exhibits, where its trickery is the most obvious feature. The section devoted to 'Make-up' could have been displayed using object, photograph and text, but instead MOMI manipulated the idea of transformation, by showing it through film. Thus, it is the visitor himself who activates a video about the history of film make-up, as he seats himself in a make-up chair in a 'dressing-room'.[270] The 'mirror' facing the visitor-actor now transpires to be a video screen depicting, among other things, the 'extremes' of film make-up (and the ability of the camera to play tricks), as a celluloid Dr Jekyll becomes Mr Hyde.

The coming of sound to the early cinema introduced a further concern and interpretative device for the museum, reflected in the increasingly prominent use of speech and music in these displays. It was noticeable that the aural material used was predominately that of original recordings, or, if re-created, in *imitation* of that historical style: the approach was never that of an objective narrative voice. Straightforward factual information was reserved for the comparative detachment of text-panels, observing through the eyes of the present decade and making a striking contrast with the general sense of time-travelling elsewhere. The section, devoted to 'Sound in Films', demonstrated how ably it was possible to draw together object and sound and make them of equal importance: a large screened

[270]The video is only operated when the make-up chair is inhabited.

video (working on a loop system) contained a narrative explaining the development of sound, accompanied by appropriate film clips - a studio orchestra, film editing and rehearsing the music 'against' a film. Below this video screen, were grouped a number of representative sound-producing artefacts, ranging from an old upright piano to a 1953 Electro-Recording machine. As each of these items was mentioned, it was picked-out by a spotlight: the piano played a medley of music suitable to the accompaniment of a silent film from the 1920s; and when the narrative voice described the improvements made in sound reproduction caused by the introduction of stereo and Dolby sound, then the voice *itself* changed to stereo and Dolby (from mono), so that the audience was able to *hear* the difference. Indeed, once again exploiting the idea of 'entertainment within entertainment', MOMI made the 'Central Control Centre' for the museum's technical displays into an exhibit in itself. Situated at the core of the museum, this was a glass-sided room through which the visitor could see the banks of equipment (and staff) necessary to control the video and projection booths and sound.[271] Visitors were invited to ask the operating technicians questions.

The sub-division of the story of the moving image into fifty-two parts might, at first glance, have seemed to be excessive, however, in practice, the use of these clearly defined thematic sections had the result of making palatable to the visitor a subject of such vast proportions that it might well have become long-winded and unwieldy if treated as one continuous display. Segments - *themes* - are more easily assimilated in this volume of material; and the visitor may choose to pass-by sections of less interest to him rather than feeling compelled to work through

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[271]MOMI's 'Control Centre' operates twenty-six sound amplifiers providing fifty-two channels of sound - one for each section of the exhibition. It operates six 35mm and two 16mm film projectors working on an endless loop system and Laser-Video for seventy video-disc players each linked to a screen in the museum. It also oversees all the interactive exhibits of the 'special effects' sections. (Looking at my other sources, in general, it is noticeable that museums presenting cinema or other 'moving image' collections are likely to make use of associated technology. Nearly all of these museums use video and, in addition, a third of these also use slide and compact disc, video and projector or 'live' film.)

everything in order to make sense of the museum. Nevertheless, whilst using the many-section idea, the overall structure of the museum is still chronological, and so the visitor feels subconsciously propelled to see, quite literally, what is around the corner of the next section of moving image history.

The section on 'British Cinema' was a chronological display, decade by decade, using original props and costumes from the turn of the century to the 1980s. The more recognisable material, taken from well-known films, was chosen with the effect of acting as a microcosm of the British film industry (represented skilfully through carefully chosen objects), while a number of pull-out information boards allowed the visitors to look-up details on specific actors or directors for themselves.[272] Adjacent to this section was MOMI's own one-hundred and thirty-five seat cinema, showing different films and lectures throughout the day;[273] and which acts as a moment of punctuation and rest, before the museum shifts gear in beginning to examine the post-war imagery and television of a more modern age.

Appropriately, the increasing commercialism and spread of the moving image, in television and advertising, was reflected in the greater number of hands-on, sound and picture facilities for the visitors in these sections of the museum. Many of these activities deployed the multiple-choice scenarios of the touch-screen computer, (though in a disguised form in order to suit both the nature of the exhibits themselves and the period of broadcasting history being interpreted). A visitor choosing a film on the 'BBC and the War Years', would see it played simultaneously on seven different television sets (each an annotated example of the

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[272]A space-saving device, the holding of such additional data is now usually found on computers in museums. In MOMI's high-tech surroundings the pull-out boards looked a little 'quaint', but were used by the visitors nonetheless. They may have been thought to be in keeping with the 1940s 'look' of the 'British Cinema' section.

[273]This cinema favours the showing of classic or especially influential films. On the occasion of my visit, the film was the 1957 Russian 'realist' tale *Story of a Soldier*.

different designs of 'television furniture') while 'Advertising' played nine different advertisements on nine different screens and a pick-up 'phone allowed the visitor to listen to the story of a particular consumer brand over the years.

From here on, the ambience of MOMI starts deliberately to change, as the museum utilised the gimmickry and technical innovations of the modern age of performance. Hidden pressure points - activated by the unwary visitor - cause Marilyn Monroe to sing, and a 'Dalek' to threaten them - most effectively - with annihilation. The final emphasis of the museum on special effects is clearly chosen to revitalise the perhaps now rather tired visitor, with renewed interest; and to act for the less historically-minded as a technological incentive to have 'worked through' the rest of the museum. The 'Special Effects' exhibits are probably the best known (and certainly the best publicised) of the museum's attributes;[274] and this is key to an understanding of MOMI, for above all else the interest in these effects lies in their *creation* - the process and illusion of making film and television, rather than the end products themselves. As with music, where most visitors are interested in the *sound* and the *playing* of an instrument and not with what it looks like, so here the visitors are interested in what it *looks like* for them to be able to fly like 'Superman', and *how they sound* when they are reading a television autocue. The technical processes and machinery which facilitate this are, of course, also important, but they are not most visitors' primary concern, and are of significance only in the context of enabling such creative things to take place. MOMI's success is that it interprets the creation of images by means of its material collections, rather than letting the artefacts themselves dictate what it is possible to show of their creative life - as is usually the case with musical instrument collections. Unlike such musical collections, this approach is also inclusive of the visitors and their personal ideas: film and television encapsulate

[274]Since opening in 1988, all of MOMI's exhibits, either new or up-dated, are considered for 'hands-on' applicability. (Jane Sharratt, Production Manager, MOMI, 10.2.94.)

the extremes of 'high' and 'low' culture and so the interpretation of the subject does not have music's elitist overtones within a museum setting. Unprecedented in a musical museum, MOMI's section on 'Contemporary Television' includes 'soundbites' on the industry made by the general public; and a humorous three-dimensional 'sculpture' provides a breakdown of the cost of television (both the BBC and Independent channels), to show the visitor 'where your money goes'. Comments on contemporary music and the music industry in general, are rarely, if ever, found in music museums.

The fact that the museum calls itself one of the 'Moving Image' and not of 'Cinema' or 'Television' is telling: not just a nominal term, it is borne out in the imaginative and practical nature of its displays. With, perhaps, a conscious sense of symmetry, the visitors' tour of the museum ends with a model of a giant brain (as it 'opened' with an eye), symbolising the future of sound and image together in current developments, such as 'Virtual Reality'. It is apparent that, as with music, the realisation of the moving image will never be finite, either in practice or in terms of what is shown in the museum: the museum implies that it will develop as its material demands; it has not set boundaries on its material as music has.

Role Play

MOMI's exhibition is complete and self-explanatory in its own right, but it is distinguished and enhanced by the employment of a number of permanent actor-guides. The use of actors to interpret a museum's display is one of increasing prominence.[275] MOMI's actors are dispersed throughout the museum, working

[275]Usually favoured by museum dealing with less object-centred material (the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television); with 'concepts' (the Science Museum), and with accounts of social history (Beamish Open Air Museum). A number of firms such as 'Past Pleasures' (est.1988), specialise in providing costumed interpreters on a temporary or full-time basis, covering styles from pre-history to the present day. 'Past Pleasures' include, for example, *The Hogarth Ensemble* , an

both visually (in costume and manners suitable to the individual period and 'character'), and verbally, as they speak to the visitors about the exhibits and themselves. Each character speaks in 'First Person' and, more importantly, *retains* their character,[276] never slipping out of the role, so that in many ways the idea of *playing a part*, (becoming someone else in an artificial environment), mirrors the veneer of realism of cinema and television itself.[277] In this way, the actor-guides become as active and integral to a study of the 'moving image' as the artefacts themselves within the museum; they are the antithesis of passive education, embodying the *spirit* of the museum.[278] On a simpler level, they also function by engaging the visitors in interactive scenarios, either through formal 'set-pieces' (giving a magic lantern display), or informally, by chatting, cajoling or accosting the visitor in passing, as their character and scenario dictates.[279]

The ability of the actor-guides to 'weigh-up' their audience and to improvise accordingly, is of paramount importance to the success of this approach, if the

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orchestra of Baroque period musicians specialising in performing music in its original setting.

[276]Some museums using actors prefer the use of a 'Third Person' character, with the actor being able to talk *about* the character rather than living it. Social history museums (Beamish Museum, the Black County Museum, Dudley), often use this approach in order to relate their historical personas to their circumstances, and how they compare with the modern day. For some visitors, this is less intimidating ; and they can chat informally with a 'farmer' or a 'shopkeeper'.

[277]This is carried out tirelessly. Visitors mentioning the word 'museum' are met with puzzled looks, ('No Madam, this is an Electric Theatre'), and even when passing through one museum section to another, the character is retained: a 1930s character from the 'Hollywood' section strides through the 'Victorian Pioneers' section whistling 'You ought to be in Pictures', a foretaste of attractions to come.

[278]This is the same principle used by the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, which employs a number of actors - 'Action Replay' - as the ultimate example of an interactive 'exhibit', embodying the ideas of the museum: 'The history of the visual image has seen countless moments of excitement, tragedy, humour - and drama. "Action Replay", the museum's resident theatre company, are pioneers in lively, physical and fast-moving interpretation. Using a variety of theatrical techniques, "Action Replay" bring to life, before your eyes, those stories behind the development of photography, film and television. Who said learning about science and history couldn't be fun?' (Leaflet 'Get More Image Conscious', *The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television*, 1994.)

[279]I was, literally, dragged-away from a section on 'Chaplin' to a section on 'Soviet Cinema' by a dirty-looking costumed 'Bolshevik' who, treating me as a 'fellow revolutionary', propelled me into a replica of an old disused railway carriage in order to watch a propaganda film - Eisenstein's *The Milk Cow*.

visitor is not to be intimidated but encouraged to ask questions. Though text may be more durable within a museum, it cannot change or mould itself at whim to suit every visitor's breadth of knowledge and interest, but must either target a specialist audience or tread a careful *via media*. The provision of actor-guides, however, can range in scope from introducing a little 'local colour' by simply being present in a particular section of the museum, to them becoming didactic interpreters on behalf of the exhibits.[280] Where the latter is so, it is achieved by talking *as* the character, relating the topic to their own personal experience, in such a way, that the visitor is largely unaware that while he is being *informed* in an entertaining way, he is also being *educated*. This is particularly effective if the actor can replace in speech what would be verbose, or dull, in text. In this way, the 'cinema owner' of a 1910 British 'Electric Theatre' was able to enthuse to his audience about the progress being made in the British cinema scene, and talk about the making of the 'Rover' film[281] showing in his theatre; and cinema ushers of the 1940s opened the door to the 'cinema' containing the section on 'British Cinema', whilst gossiping informally amongst themselves about the 'current' London Blitz. At times, the actor-guides are used to get the visitors actively involved in the museum, (for example, undergoing a 'screen test' where they act-out a shoot-out in a Western saloon bar set), having the double purpose of entertaining both the participants and other watching visitors (and again playing with the idea of 'cinema' and 'reality' as a visitor becomes actor, to become a cowboy, directed by a real actor *acting* as an actor, within a Western set that is itself part of a 'Hollywood' section within a museum.) The actor-guide offers a perspective on the museum that is, thus, quite different from that of a curator giving a guided tour: 'We don't want to be greeted by people who see it as their

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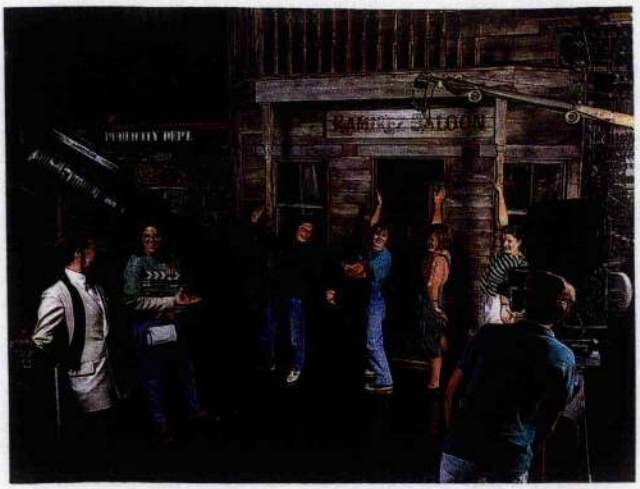
[280]the use of actor-guides can also be a temporary or changing feature: the Science Museum provides guides in different guises on different days - for example, a Second World War 'Spitfire' pilot in the 'History of Aviation' Gallery.

[281]'Rover' films (featuring the adventures of a dog of that name), were a popular series of films shown in the very early days of the British Cinema.



A 'screen test' taking place at the *Museum of the Moving Image's* Western Saloon set.

(Reproduced courtesy of MOMI.)

duty to *guard* history rather than to explain it.'[282] The creative spirit of the subject is suited to this method, being subjective rather than objective; about *ideas* more than objects.

It is usual for the museums and heritage centres, which use actors in some way, to stress the active, participatory nature of a visit, as in the example of Beamish: The Great Northern Experience - though this has sometimes been criticised for subserving academic and historical integrity below that of entertainment: it is argued that the actors' representation of 'life' is of a sanitised version. The same criteria, however, cannot be applied to MOMI, which is substantially different in that it has created characters suggested by the type of collection and who respond *to* that collection, rather than living *in* it as at Beamish. MOMI is still essentially about individual exhibits - even moving ones - but Beamish is a recreation of a whole world.

Whilst it might be beyond the scope of most music collections to have a 'resident Mozart',[283] the human element of music is blatantly missing in many collections, and there is a pressing need for more *images* of musicians (from all walks of life), to be depicted pictorially, on video (or equivalent) and in live performance, if possible, if they are to achieve the same level of spontaneity and practical creativity that MOMI does. It is unfortunate, therefore, that there is a tendency for some museums to look upon the heightened use of modern technology and actors as a gimmick, appealing only to the populist end of the visitor spectrum. Even the intense focus on the moving image itself, through film and sound *over that of text*, is treated with suspicion in some quarters, seeming to promise more of the 'theme park' than the museum; although it is apparent that film - as a relatively new

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[282]Susan Marling, [on the Black County Museum] 'With a Shawl and a Bun, she's History', *The Independent*, (27.5.94), p.22.

[283]Although it is recognised, that the idea of the actor-guide has great potential for sympathetic collections, as a 'humanising' tool.

museum subject - is perhaps more likely to make use of modern technology and interpretative ideas. Dealing with such transitory matter, there is, as in music, a need to suit the interpretation to the nature of the material; and the material - being less object-based - requires more than a simple object-text account. MOMI is not attempting to be wholly populist, but to interpret its subject matter in a sympathetic manner. The museum claims both entertainment and education to be its priorities, from '... the general interest visitor to those undertaking specialist research',[284] with an academic side revealed in special lectures, workshops and annual events, whose filmic concerns range from the technical to the philosophical.

The idea of exalting the *image* (as something created) and not the *object* is still highly unusual in museum terms, and yet MOMI's approach is clearly symbiotic: there is no tension between the combination of static artefacts with moving images. MOMI explains by:

> ... illustrating the subject of cinema and television history through the moving image itself and accompanying that story with strong design-concept settings, live interpretation through actor-guides and use of static displays.[285]

In the 'Hollywood' section, a huge video screen shows a six-minute film (itself called 'Precious Images'), made-up of four-hundred and sixty-nine classic scenes from the cinema. This exhibit is symbolic of the whole museum, for the audience is so bombarded with images throughout the course of the exhibition that they become important entities in their own right, and achieve the status usually afforded only to concrete material objects. The problematic nature of presenting

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[284]Jane Sharratt, Production Manager, MOMI, (10.2.94).
[285]*Ibid.*

any sort of transitory subject matter has necessitated a somewhat radical approach towards its artefacts. Marion Segard goes so far as to refer to it as:

> ... a sense of mission - establishing cultural recognition, developing visual literacy and critical awareness, bringing 'culture' and 'industry' together....[286]

While, at the same time, understanding that:

> ... the museums set up with the purpose of stimulating a culture based on current industrial and cultural innovations cannot escape the historicising process inherent in the museum form itself.[287]

Problems occur where a policy of *historical* interpretation becomes *stagnant* representation instead, a *coup de grace* to any museum dealing with a non-concrete subject.

The popularity of MOMI cannot be questioned. Though concerned with a high profile (and wealthy) subject matter, its interpretation has to match the *expectations* of its visitors accustomed to the professionalism and glamour associated with it. It is, for this reason, that MOMI's 'sister' museum the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television [288] (and not, thankfully, due to its geographic location, its 'rival'), can claim to be the most popular museum outside London and

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[286] Marion Segard, The *Museum Time Machine*, ed. Robert Lumley(London, 1988), p.16.
[287] *Ibid.*, p.18.
[288] The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television (opened in 1983) is a branch of the Science Museum, with 2,000,000 items in its collection, (of which only one per cent is on display). With the inclusion of its Photographic galleries, this museum covers much the same ground and material as MOMI. 'Packed with things to do and find out. A whole day out for all the family.' (Leaflet 'Put Yourself in the Picture at the *National Museum of Photography, Film and Television*', (1994)); with the emphasis on hands-on and special effects technology ('fly on a magic carpet'). A unique attraction is IMAX, the United Kingdom's largest cinema screen (52' x 64'), which shows films daily.

with 'the widest spread [of visitor types] of any National Museum'.[289] Both of these museums stress the commercial and populist aspects of their collections because they are valid and major contributors to the moving image they wish to represent. In comparison with music collections, it is often forgotten that music *also* was - and is - written for people and for occasions; and in this sense, it is equally commercial and populist. However, this side has been denied, in order to present it as an 'academic' subject, and, as a result, in contrast with museums like MOMI, it appears anaemic rather than expansive and flourishing. The comparative success of many smaller museums, in presenting the moving image in one form or another, must also be considered, both in the light of their *awareness* that the subject is something 'bigger' than that of objects alone, and in their ability to present an *idea* of the moving image as a creative thing. Images are a form of illusion, and yet it is frequently the atmospheric recreation of 'realism' which helps the visitor to understand the *experience* of moving images. Perhaps when dealing with any such transitory material, the only way to present it with meaning is to recreate as accurately as possible the *conditions* in which it would appear in actual life. Such an example was witnessed at a visit to the recreated cinema display at Armley Mill Museum:

> ... the cinema is no old fashioned museum of static displays, but a fully working proposition....The plush curtains part and then comes a really time warping moment. Gas lights flicker on their brackets - a well used piano stands before the screen curtains, while the seating is contained in a sort of enclosure of waist-high boarding, rather akin to that found in the less trendy type of non-conformist chapel....My guide left me transfixed

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[289]Letter from Greg Hobson, Exhibitions Curator, the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, 28.1.94. (Attendance figures: MOMI (1991-2) 437,385; the National Museum of Photography, Film and Television (1992) 784,814.)

> with admiration while he went to the box and pushed the 'Tabs open' button - and yes, there was revealed a *real* screen.[290]

This is the context in which the museum shows its projected film sequences, ('Learning in a relaxed atmosphere - related to the individual's experience'),[291] and working demonstrations of cinema equipment from 1908-75. Working machinery is integrated with practical demonstration and the audio-visual with the static displays, because it is believed that this is the only way in which the visitor will appreciate the locally produced 'Kalee Projectors', which are the main focus for the display. Left to be merely 'objects', they would become the functional equivalents of silent musical instruments. It is certain that if atmosphere and context are taken to be a first priority in understanding film material, then demonstration adds a further dimension, regardless of how object-rich a museum's collection may be. This is apparent in the Laurel and Hardy Museum in Ulverston, Cumbria,[292] which, though it is concerned principally with ephemera amounting to over ten-thousand items crammed into three small rooms, comes to life in its tiny thirty-two seat cinema, when showing a video biography and film snippets of some of the two comedians' one-hundred and five films.[293] Guided tours - wherein the curator-guide explains items of the collection - may introduce an empathic, personal touch to the museum visit, but 'Without a doubt it's the visual aspect'[294] that visitors are attracted by: the ephemera is only induced with a sense of meaning through association; it is the creative, fleeting art that is important to them.

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[290]The Editor, 'Have you ever had a thrill in Leeds?', *TABS: The Informative Journal of the Rank Strand Group*, vol.39, no.2, (November 1982). This cinema display in Armley Mill Museum, Leeds, was built to represent a 1920s 'Picture Palace'.
[291]Letter from P. J. Kelley, Curator, Armley Mill Museum, 22.2.94.
[292]Ulverston was the birthplace of Stan Laurel in 1890. The museum is a very small, independent concern with about 10,000 visitors per year.
[293]The museum owns all but two of the one-hundred and five films made by Laurel and Hardy over a seventy-year period.
[294]Letter from Bill Cubin, Curator/Owner, The Laurel and Hardy Museum, 1.2.94.

CHAPTER 7

THEATRE AND THE PERFORMING ARTS: THE CONCEPT OF PERFORMANCE IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

For any museum presenting material derived from the theatre or the performing arts, the most important criteria is to convey some sense of the idea of *performance*. It is for this reason that theatrical material has close links with the musical, for without *creativity*, there is no true notion of either subject. Like music, 'theatre' is normally interpreted through its associated artefacts; its written play texts are the equivalent of musical scores, its theatrical buildings with concert halls, and its properties and costumes with musical instruments. It is, however, in this respect that the difficulty lies in its presentation, for, like music, the concept that 'theatre' is a performance, taking-in words, images and movement in order to create an experience, removes it from the realms of the simple object on display. Although all objects are instilled with meaning to some extent, the theatrical and musical imply a great deal more than can usually be inferred from merely looking at them as 'objects': but without creativity there is no true 'theatre'; it is as much a world of actors and playwrights as the building where the entertainment is performed. Theatre and the performing arts share both music and film's transitory quality, and the latter's visual impact;[295] but it differs from film and sides with music in the crucial area of creative uniqueness: each theatrical performance is unique in its own right; it is spontaneous, in a way that film can never be, because theatre is *live* and not *recorded* movement.[296]

For the purposes of this chapter, two contrasting museums have been studied: the Theatre Museum, which offers an object-based, 'academic' and traditional

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[295]This is, of course, with the obvious exception of radio dramatisations.
[296]Again, this is not applicable if the performance is a recorded one capturing (repetitively) a single unique performance.

museological style of interpretation, and the Shakespeare Globe Museum, which favours a more practical and subjective account of theatre, acting under the auspices of being a 'museum'. It will be seen that each is successful in its own fashion: the Theatre Museum is akin to collections of musical instruments in focusing as an archive upon artefacts and their association with performance, while the Shakespeare Globe Museum mirrors music's interest in the lives and works of famous musicians. In this regard, the Globe is of importance on both counts (Shakespeare's theatrical age and his plays in performance), making it singularly disposed towards a practical canvass.[297] The relative popularity of performing art collections is an issue that will also emerge from this discussion, for it is clear that - as much as the exhibitions themselves - the *attitude* conveyed to the public through the museum's handling of the material has much to do with its success.

Theatre collections - though perceived as being more 'high-brow' than film, cinema or television - have still maintained the idea that they once existed - and continue to exist - to *entertain*; a concept that is almost wholly lacking from music collections. To a greater extent, in theatrical collections, opera and ballet - traditionally 'elitist' art forms - have been humanised: Shakespeare has been 'brought to the masses' to be greeted with enthusiasm. The theatrical *experience* has been proven to be far more exciting than its 'objects' can ever be: the trick is, perhaps, in learning to present the experience via the objects, (or at least be *appearing* to do so), rather than using the objects as the starting-point.

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[297]The practical nature of the Shakespeare Globe Museum is unusual when compared to that of music museums dealing with a personality, in that it puts the life and works of the individual *into practice.* More akin to the musical 'birthplace museum' approach, is the Ellen Terry Memorial Museum at Tenderden, Kent. Preserved as a 'shrine' to the actress, it seeks to evoke the atmosphere of the days in which she lived there, through costume, pictures and personal items; but avoids more modern audio-visual techniques as inappropriate to the setting. Regardless of its object-based approach, it does, however, boast an adjacent barn-theatre - still used for performances. (Letter from Margaret Weare, Custodian, Ellen Terry Memorial Museum, 10.4.94.)

The Theatre Museum

> Situated at the heart of theatreland, this Museum is for everyone! Exciting displays drawn from the world's best theatre collection celebrates 400 years of live performance from Shakespeare to the present. All year round celebrity events and special exhibitions conjure up the magic of the stage and provide entertainment for all the family.[298]

In 'celebrating 400 years of live performance', the Theatre Museum ('the National Museum of the Performing Arts')[299] outlines its goals: an historical account that is tempered by the practicality of the subject. The museum seeks to find a happy medium between its traditional role as a purveyor of objects and a performance-aware archive of the transitory, the spontaneous and the unique, in application, as performance art. In spite of its historical overview, the museum is thematic, having distinct sections dealing with different genres and processes occurring in the performing arts, in both permanent and temporary exhibitions. At some point during the course of the displays, circus, mime, opera, theatre, ballet and music hall are all touched upon; but the potentially bewildering breadth of material - as so in music - is controlled by the thematic system, and, as in MOMI, the historical premise is balanced by a substantial volume of contemporary material. The museum's goal is to broaden the appeal of the whole subject, to coin its own phrase, to make it a museum 'from page to stage';[300] a *complete* theatrical process.

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[298]Leaflet, The *Theatre Museum*, (1993).
[299]The museum was founded in 1987 as the 'theatrical' wing of the Victoria and Albert Museum. 1992 attendance figures 116,552.
[300]As applied to its exhibition on *The Wind in the Willows*.

As is desirable for a museum of this size and standing, the foyer area of the Theatre Museum is used as a venue in which to present a brief history of the theatre and the role played by the museum in this, '...to document, explain and promote The British Stage'.[301] In the downstairs area, the permanent galleries illustrate - through artefacts - the history of the British Stage, while the current exhibitions on 'The Royal Opera House', '*Slap* - A Celebration of Stage Make-up' and '*The Wind in the Willows:* From Page to Stage' accented the practical slant of the museum. In microcosm, the foyer area combined these two attributes in a small display recounting a brief history of the Royal Shakespeare Company, using Shakespeare's text and historical prints alongside modern-day costumes and a video showing filmed scenes from several productions. This eye-catching display, centring upon history as it is interpreted for a modern audience, perhaps suggesting to the visitor that good theatre is somehow timeless and on-going; it is historic, but not locked into an antiquated past because it is portrayed *actively*.

The first main exhibition on 'The Royal Opera House', '...sets out to show part of what is involved in running world-class opera and ballet companies in rep....It also demonstrates the constraints imposed by a nineteenth-century theatre [building] and how modernisation will address them'.[302] In doing so, this exhibition was, unfortunately, the least satisfactory in the museum, inclining towards a none too thinly-disguised display of propaganda, by basing the display upon the idea that even if a production actually makes it to the stage, the work involved in mounting a production still goes largely unrecognised. Though often true, this negative approach coloured much of the subsequent display, accented by the close proximity of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. The exhibition consists of a chronological history in text and illustration, punctuated by cameos of key figures in the history of the Opera House - for example, Dame Ninette de

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[301]Introductory label, the Theatre Museum, 1993.
[302]Label, the Theatre Museum, 1993.

Valois. In the centre of the display are scale-models of the proposed theatre reconstruction. As with MOMI, however, the general ambience is good, and much of the overbearing publicity material may be forgiven, as the visitor succumbs to a setting that is bright and 'theatrical': red carpets, red pillars and a red background to the text panels create an illusion of wealth, with the opulence of a grand concert hall. Indeed, the overall impact of such grandeur is far more memorable than the brief exhibition itself. Whether by chance or design, this sets the scene for the visitor to be responsive to the main 'exhibit', a twelve-minute video presentation on the Royal Opera House, unambiguously titled 'The Way Forward',[303] a 'life behind the scenes' story of the Royal Opera House. The video screen itself is set against a large concave photograph of the Opera House's interior *in perspective*, so that the visitor feels himself to be a part of the audience, using the ploy - as found in MOMI - of 'a theatre within a theatre', the whole framed by theatre 'curtains' as if just 'opened' upon the scene. Finally, as the visitor leaves the exhibition, a book is provided in which to write comments and suggestions on the 'Royal Opera House Appeal': many visitors read the comments even if they did not choose to add their own.

The meat of the Theatre Museum is found in the main gallery's material artefacts, 'A selection of treasures from the permanent collection',[304] and is notable for covering *all* performance art genres: Circus is as important as Ballet, Music Hall as Opera, in an inclusive and comprehensive survey rarely paralleled in musical museums. A series of long, low-ceilinged and rather tunnel-like passages display the artefacts in wall cases, sub-divided into much smaller sections, thus focusing attention onto the objects. Single, isolated items are contrasted with larger 'tableaux' arrangements, with each item numbered and related to an accompanying

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[303]Made in 1992, this film is an emotive account of dilapidated masonry and damp dressing rooms, interspersed with interviews of well-known Royal Opera House personalities such as Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

[304]As is usual with large masses of material. The display changes periodically to provide variety for visitors and to allow conservation work.

wall-label on the side of the case. No audio-visual facilities are deployed here (in contrast to the other galleries), but the varied textures and the juxtaposition of artefacts - ephemera, 'prop', costume and painting - provide visual stimulus and interest for the visitor, in a way that too similar material (as with 'species' of musical instrument) does not. Although, for obvious reasons, the account of the earlier history has to rely on reproduced illustrations and less original material, the more recent era is particularly rich in material and is, therefore, able to be presented in its entirety: objects and costumes related to photographic 'stills' of a performance; the ephemera of playbill and theatre programme suggesting the vital, literal public face of the theatre. Throughout, items of special importance are highlighted (appropriately by a 'star'), making it possible for a visitor spending little time in the gallery to at least pin-point the 'must see' items; a worthy ploy, in order to navigate such an extensive collection, and also one that would be applicable to larger collections of musical instruments.

As a national museum, the collection has amassed material from over two-hundred theatres throughout Great Britain. The policy of acquisition is an on-going one, constantly striving to build-up the collection; and there is a special emphasis on collecting material to fill the gaps in more 'neglected' subject areas, such as Dance and Mime: there is no conscious elitism. The majority of the artefacts in this gallery are of value through *association* rather than intrinsic worth (for example, Laurence Olivier's noses for *King Lear*), and it is perhaps for this reason that the attitude towards them is egalitarian when compared to the presentation of musical instruments and musical scores, which tend to be of value as *material* objects and not just in what they embody musically.

Having viewed the story of the theatre and the performing arts, the visitor is then able to see it in application, as the subsequent galleries take a practical turn. The Special Exhibition '*Slap* - A Celebration of Sage Make-up' was an opportunity to -

> Get a free black-eye or a bruise, or just watch the Museum's own make-up artist at work. See how stage make-up has developed from powder and paint to the specialist effects of 'Phantom of the Opera'. Free consultations and make-up sessions for all aspiring thespians and great fun for all the family.[305]

An exhibition where the act of looking is intensified by the subject matter, the display traced the development of stage make-up in England from the seventeenth-century to the present day. The textual account was balanced by an abundance of photographs and the use of life-size mannequins (depicting the years from 1900-1990), theatrically 'posed' and in their appropriate make-up, to show, visually, just how dramatically theatrical make-up had evolved during that short space of time. In discussing make-up as ' the art of deceiving the eye to further the illusion of beauty, age or character',[306] the display showed both the creative techniques behind 'furthering the illusion' and the result in practice, as part of a character *and* a performance: one video film showed how a young girl is made-up to look old, while another showed the make-up for the 'Phantom' in the musical 'The Phantom of the Opera', (a topical and popular choice with visitors), narrated by the actor as he undergoes the various stages of transformation. A number of wigs and costume pieces were also included here, as complimentary factors in the art of creating a character and 'deceiving the eye'. Finally, working on the principle that no amount of theory can explain as well as demonstration, a portion of the gallery had been turned into a hands-on make-up area. The design, made to resemble a theatre dressing room - numerous long mirrors surrounded by many lights, high stools and make-up boxes - added greatly to the atmosphere of the display, as visitors (mainly children), were painted with animal face masks or black eyes.

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[305]Leaflet, '*Slap* - A Celebration of Stage Make-up', the Theatre Museum, 1993.
[306]Exhibition label '*Slap* - A Celebration of Stage Make-Up', the Theatre Museum, 1993.

Theatrical black eyes, bruises, bullet wounds and character make-up is applied at *The Theatre Museum*.

(Reproduced courtesy of *The Theatre Museum*.)

The make-up artists involved supplied a commentary on their craft in process, to suit the interest and questions of both the recipients and their audience. The popularity of this section was unquestioned, the make-up artists working in shifts throughout the day.

The museum's final temporary exhibition '*The Wind in the Willows*: From Page to Stage', illustrated, to great effect, its ability to combine artefact and photograph, written text and verbal narrative, and video and hands-on, to present a *comprehensive* account of a creative process - the making of a play. This attitude contrasts remarkably with that of music, whose complex, creative facets are inevitably segmented and categorised for easy understanding and access. The feasibility of presenting a *unified* musical picture in museum display is all too often stunted, because museums (and visitors) are so accustomed to its compartmentalisation. However, while it may undoubtedly be a lengthy process to re-define and cross-reference our musical holdings, the Theatre Museum here shows that it is possible to draw together disparate parts, both in the way the subject matter is approached and in the material used for interpretation, to achieve a satisfactory whole. Rather than being weighted-down by the broad sweep of its many parts, the diversity - within an overall structure and context - is thought through to sustain the visitors' interest.

> The exhibition shows how a play is produced. It traces the progress of *Wind in the Willows* from the original text to the stage. Special emphasis is given to the role of those working behind the scenes and their theatrical careers.[307]

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[307]Introductory label, *The Wind in the Willows*, the Theatre Museum, 1993.

With an eye to the fact that many children would be brought to this exhibition, the display opened with a child-oriented appraisal of the novel,[308] looking at Kenneth Grahame's story and its famous original illustrations by E.H.Shepard. Set against the design backdrop of an Edwardian nursery,[309] it posed the questions 'What is a novel?' and 'What is a play?', to which simple definitions were given by comparing the book *The Wind in the Willows* with the play *Toad of Toad Hall.* This led onto a silent video on 'The Adaptations of the Book', using scenes from many previous productions for television, compared (in text) with the ideas of the current Playwright- Adapter, Alan Bennett. The video showed an actor putting-on his make-up, while the costume he was wearing in the film was displayed alongside: whenever possible, the display links the creative with the artefact for the visitor. Moving on from this, the next section's accent on 'Behind the Scenes' activities and people was unusual for a museum display, being conceptual and wholly practical: objects, in this case, can only be shown *in application* - as they are used by, or affect the individual, and are therefore of peripheral importance. This idea is, however, one which would adapt itself well to a musical exhibition: the 'behind the scenes' lives of, for example, all the protagonists involved in the production of a symphony orchestra concert or a Rock Band Tour would contribute a fascinating study; or even if used to a lesser extent, could place into context a wealth of musical artefacts.

Case histories of individuals working on *The Wind in the Willow's* production - a distinctly personal touch - were given against succinct and non-technical definitions of their jobs:

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[308]This child-oriented section contained a 'Mystery Box' - six boxes with 'mystery' items to feel and identify prompted by questions ('Who tripped over this in the Wild Wood?', 'Who escaped from gaol as this?'), as a *themed* version of a simple idea. It could easily be adapted to teach about different types of musical instrument.
[309]*The Wind in the Willows* was published in 1908.

> The designer is responsible for all the visual aspects of a production. This involves designing the sets, properties and costumes within a given budget and overseeing their construction and fitting.[310]

A video, showing three-dimensional images, demonstrated how the sets were designed; working-in a brief history of the National Theatre and its design peculiarities, where the production was performed. A second video featured an interview with the designer, discussing his ideas for the set: an appreciation of the practical with the aesthetic. Further large-scale photographs of the production in rehearsal and in performance, contributed a pictorial background to the practical discussion of the various theatrical professions.

The section entitled 'Creating the Character' featured audio-visual footage in combination with the 'case-history' idea, resulting in a view of the character both from 'behind stage' and 'in front of' the curtain. Brief textual quotations made by the Voice Coach and Movement Director about their work, were deployed against photographs, costumes, and a video of a 'character rehearsal' in progress. The film demonstrated how the actors put on their make-up and character props - false teeth, wigs and glasses - which were displayed as artefacts in front of the visitor. The creation of a character was described in the actor's own words: a case of anthropomorphism for the stage - in the book the animals have human characteristics, but in the play, the human actors have to *reverse* the idea, in order to show animal mannerisms. Here, a video showed how the actors were taught to imitate the movements of mole, rat, toad and badger through watching them on wildlife film; and swatches of material, dyes and designer's sketches were set beside it to complement the video and continue the theme into 'Dressing the Character'. Throughout the exhibition, in spite of the volume and diversity of material being displayed, a pattern in the way the subject was being presented was

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[310]Label, *The Wind in the Willows*, the Theatre Museum, 1993.

quickly discernible to the visitor : first, to read about a practice, then to view its associated objects, and finally to watch both aspects *in application* on video.

Having negotiated stark realism in the theatre professions explored, the exhibition subsequently moved into direct artifice for its final sections. A replica of a backstage area of a theatre (presumably that of the National Theatre) was set out with prompt book, lighting and Tabs controls and a fully-stocked properties table for a performance of *The Wind in the Willows*. Just beyond this area, the 'live' sound of the play in performance could be heard, by listening - as would be the case in reality - to the headset provided. The visitor was invited to try on Toad's gloves, Ratty's collar and tie and Mole's spectacles from the prop table. After this, in conclusion, and following a natural progression, the last display section was devoted to 'Criticism and Reviews'; a summation of the production, this was unusual in using children's comments rather than adults' and gave the exhibition a cyclical slant, by closing it as it had opened, with a child's perspective on the story.

Live performance and related events contribute the final and most obviously practical, realistic and popular embodiment of 'theatre' presented in the museum.[311] These are also the events least reliant - if at all - upon 'objects', making them the antithesis of usual museum interest. Above all, live performance serves to illustrate the art of theatre or of performing arts through movement, sound and vision; it encapsulates all the aspects of 'theatre' which are most difficult to present in a museological context. Live performance, on a daily basis, within the Theatre Museum either takes the form of a 'performance' or a reading

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[311]Typically, the September - November 1993 Season included: Readings of *The Comedy of Errors*, a BBC Radio Drama Innovation Evening, a BBC Radiophonic Workshop (on producing sound for drama) and a Writer's Workshop. (Leaflet 'What's On', Autumn 1993, *The Theatre Museum*.)

from a play.[312] For visitors, the populist aspect of this scenario is often stressed to off-set any idea of the performance being thought of as conspicuously 'high-brow':[313] 'A lively programme of celebrity play readings and productions gives visitors a unique insight into current theatre practice.'[314] In this, new plays are given equal prominence with established classics - a rare occurrence with music - and for younger visitors, a 'Saturday Theatre Club' caters for ten to fourteen-year olds. The practical side of the museum is further developed through its Education Unit, running a rich and varied programme of services to schools and colleges. These workshops and free days cover both theatre practice in general (for example, 'lighting', 'The Victorian Theatre') and specific set texts.[315]

Within the Theatre Museum, it is impossible and improbable to imagine its material artefacts divorced from their creative purpose. This inter-dependency takes many forms, from the simple combination of object with contextual photograph, to object with audio-visual footage, to live performance and hands-on. The realisation that museums dealing with this type of practical subject matter have a duty to *look beyond* its associated objects, is now prevalent. It is greatly aided in this by the development of the 'new technologies'; the audio-visual element is integral to its displays, indeed, so much so, that the museum plans to develop a 'National Video Archive' of stage performance,[316] keen to encourage interviews and debate on contemporary issues. Clearly, the Theatre Museum is forward-looking, ever wary of the fact - as with classical music - that for many individuals theatre is a 'minority taste' and has to be presented in an encouraging way: it

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[312]On the occasion of my visit, the museum was presenting scenes from a new play *Epping Forest*.

[313]In a competitive market, museums have had to stress increasingly their populist side in their front of house activities, although the Theatre Museum (as does MOMI) places equal value upon its well-used archive and study facilities.

[314]Leaflet 'Live Performance and Other Events', *The Theatre Museum*, 1993.

[315]The Theatre Museum claims that *Theatre Studies* is the fastest growing 'A'- Level subject in schools, placing it in sharp contrast with *Music*, which is in decline.

[316]Stated in a letter from Amanda O'Neale, Marketing Department, the Theatre Museum, (5.7.94.) The museum also hopes to establish a fund to buy manuscripts from modern playwright, to sustain its contemporary collections.

recognises that the majority of the public are introduced to contemporary drama and fiction through *television* and not live theatre. However, while it is perfectly agreeable for music museums to remain grounded in the imagery of the classical concert hall (as performing arts use that of the theatre), this is only successful if the attitude is a non-elitist one: contemporary and popular material has to be included to represent an on-going process, the continuum of 'performance'. *Museums* may appreciate the future by understanding the past (through their collections), but many visitors need exactly the reverse - a starting-point in familiar current material from which they can then work in retrograde.

Consistently, the Theatre Museum strives to present its collection as active, performance-related material. It describes itself in terminology and analogy never found in musical collections:

> Theatre is magical and alive. Theatre is performance - all sorts of performance.... Theatre is the expectant hush when the lights are dimmed... the familiar arias, the spectacular solo, 'a good night out'.... Performance is immediate but ephemeral, and yet so much careful preparation is involved.... Through these images and objects, The Theatre Museum hopes to transmit some of the memories and magic, the pleasure and joy of performance.[317]

This recognition of the transitory nature of all performance is key to the success of the museum. The museum's approach to the subject is fresh and innovative, perhaps because like film collections, the idea of collecting this type of material is relatively recent in museum terms; it was not truly until the start of the century that the associated objects which form the base of the museum's attributes were

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[317]Alexander Schouvaloff, 'Preface', *The Theatre Museum*, (the Victoria and Albert Museum, London,1987),p.4.

thought of as being significant.[318] It is clear that the more recently collectable artefacts tend to possess more up-to-date technology and have more modern methodologies applied to them; something the older-established musical collections will have to learn to adopt if they are to survive.

The Shakespeare Globe Museum

> *The Shakespeare Globe Museum* traces the development of the Elizabethan stage from its first purpose-built playhouse *The Theatre* in 1576 to the closing of *The Globe* 1642. During your visit you will see models and illustrations, plus textual information which explains the story of Elizabethan London and its playhouses. You are given a unique insight into the working life of William Shakespeare, his fellow playwrights, the actors, the patrons and the audiences, all set in the social conditions of Shakespeare's time.[319]

The Shakespeare Globe Museum(opened in 1972), is wholly devoted to the Elizabethan stage within the London 'Bankside' area. Its premise - as it has always been since it opened - is didactic and practical, indeed so much so that the Museum Manager is '...afraid the title 'Museum' has always been a misnomer!... [it is] not technically a registered museum but an educational exhibition.'[320] To this end, the museum's exhibitions are somewhat pushed out of the limelight by its performance activities; and the whole is overshadowed by the building of a replica *Globe Theatre*, a cherished dream, soon to come to fruition.

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[318]*Ibid.*, p.5. The idea for a London-based 'Theatre Museum' was first mooted in 1911.
[319]Leaflet, *The Shakespeare Globe Museum*, (1993).
[320]Nicholas Robins, Museum Manager, the Shakespeare Globe Museum, 1993.

On entering the museum, visitors are instructed to watch a video presentation on the 'Re-building of the New Globe Theatre'[321] in a small room given over to reconstructions, models, architect's plans and paperwork describing their fund-raising appeal. William Walton's famous music for the 1944 film of *Henry V* fills the room; the video uses clips from other popular filmed Shakespeare and well-known actors to relate the story - and the appeal.[322] Immediately, the image of 'Shakespeare' and *The Globe* become populist and familiar to the visitor. The video rapidly combines words and images to convey history, social context, modern comment and filmed 'live' performance. The re-construction of *The Globe* (based on evidence taken from the original archaeological excavations made in 1989),[323] overshadows all of the material artefacts subsequently included in this section: selections of different timbers and wood-working tools compliment photographs of the construction in progress. Unfortunately, these object-bound displays have a temporary, even amateurish look to them, as if pending display, or waiting for the purpose-built museum that is to be part of the new Globe Theatre Centre to house them properly.

Within the museum, subsequent 'object' displays are small and thematic. '*The Rose* Discovered', a permanent display on the excavation of the *Rose Theatre* is told through photographs, text and drawing alone, and markedly lacks the energy of 'The Globe Theatre Appeal Exhibition' in its one-dimensional, literally 'flat' display. The historical display 'The Story of the Elizabethan Age' is also rather dull: an almost completely textual 'book-on-the-wall' account, this display, though worthy, is overlong, using only a handful of models and costumes to

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[321]Visitors are invited to view the building site near-by to witness the work in progress.

[322]The video is narrated by the late Sam Wanamaker, who had made the building of a replica *Globe Theatre* into a personal and highly publicised project.

[323]The original *Globe Theatre* was built in Southwark in 1599. It saw the first performances of *Hamlet, Othello* and *King Lear.*

alleviate the detailed narrative.[324] The text, drawing on contemporary Shakespearean quotations, is particularly dense and erudite; it is ideal for school parties and scholars but the more general-interest visitor is dissuaded by the sheer volume and 'look' of the text.

In striking contrast to the comparative opaqueness of these exhibitions, the museum's 'Indoor Theatre' appears dynamic and exciting. This full-working replica of a seventeenth-century indoor private playhouse (built in 1976), provides the life-blood of the museum. Designed with the aim of introducing the plays of Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Theatre in general to students and school children, it seeks to inspire through a programme of workshops, lectures and courses,[325] professional and amateur performance. This theatre puts into perspective the rest of the material artefacts in the museum; moreso, when museum visitors are able to see a workshop or a rehearsal *as it is happening* in the theatre.[326] Without turning it into an historical 'exhibit', discreet texts on the side wall briefly explain the history, lay-out and workings of the theatre.

If, at the present time, much of the Globe Museum appears to be in limbo,[327] its concerns for the active, creative essence of the museum is re-affirmed in its plans for the International Shakespeare Globe Centre, intended to be a focus for culture and education. When completed, this will contain a greatly expanded museum

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[324]The opposite is the case with the Royal Shakespeare Company's collection shown at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, consisting of a temporary exhibition which draws upon its six-hundred costumes and three-hundred and fifty pictures to present a *visual* and *object-based* account . Video is used only occasionally and the display is designed to be deliberately populist.

[325]As part of the International Globelink Project, children were invited to design their own theatre - many of these drawings were on display. Other artefacts and drawings were collected by the children to be put inside a 'time capsule', to be buried under the new *Globe Theatre.*

[326]Even when the theatre is 'closed' to visitors, it may still be viewed from the balcony of the 'Theatre Gallery'; it is integral to the exhibition.

[327]In spite of its excellent educational activities, the museum does not have a 'high profile' for visitors (1994 attendance 23,000). It is anticipated that the new Globe Centre will change this dramatically.

The replica Jacobean theatre stage 'The Cockpit' used for lectures and drama workshops at the *Shakespeare Globe Museum*.

(Photograph by Andrew Fulgoni, reproduced courtesy of the *Globe Education Centre*.)

and exhibition[328] (housed beneath the newly built *Globe Theatre* itself), an audio-visual archive, a small cinema, a lecture hall, an Education Centre and an indoor theatre (*The Inigo Jones*).[329] Although within this new scenario the museum will be only part of a much larger concern, by implication, the use and understanding of this type of museum will be improved in every way through its association with live theatre. It has even been suggested that a resident theatre company should be established. Here, the parallels with music are obvious, in the visitors' increased understanding, enjoyment and even perception of the *quality* of their visit, through the inclusion of live performance.

Acting Up

Museums with theatre or performance art collections seem predisposed towards interpreting them in an active way, whether *suggested* or *played out*:

> We are increasingly aware of the need to move with the times/technology and have learned from our North American counterparts that performance can be an effective communication which we seek to explore.[330]

The idea of imaginative role play and practical hands-on are growing areas in museums and are particularly apt for performance art material. Many establishments (such as the National Trust), now have practical or role play programmes as a standard part of their outreach activities, in the belief that *participation* - especially for children - is a vital element, both in learning through

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[328]The exhibition will be on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. The museum is considering the introduction of audio tapes and hand-sets for visitors in this section, (1994).

[329]It is hoped that the *Globe Theatre* will open by 1999. An experimental first performance will be staged in August 1995 as part of a 'prologue season'. (*The Museums Journal*, October 1994, p.19)

[330]Letter from Elizabeth Carnegie, History Curator, Glasgow Museums, 1.9.94. (Responsible for a significant amount of performance art ephemera which is used as background material to illustrate themes within the main display.)

taking part and through watching. Performance, in some form, is more likely to engender the visitor a sense of 'belonging' to the museum. It is perhaps easier for single-subject museums to devise a 'theme' ,[331] a practical element that will work cohesively with the rest of the museum to provide a holistic picture. In this, 'theatre' collections often appear to be more forward-thinking than their musical counterparts; there is, for example, no musical equivalent to the Young National Trust Theatre. As befits the subject, they are also more imaginative in their interpretation within the museum setting. The recent Barbican Centre display on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* called 'How to be Bottom'[332] dispersed its mix of glass case and computer displays within a 'maze' and 'forest' inspired by the play. Computers 'spoke' Shakespeare's words and, rather than relying on Mendelssohn for background music, visitors were invited to compose their own melodies to suit the storyline, using the sound of Elizabethan instruments reconstructed through the computer. In this case, the extensive use of hands-on technology compensated for the lack of direct human interaction; successful because the premise was still a *creative* one.

It is apparent that even when the theatre or performance art collection is small or of limited resources, the museums involved usually attempt to instil into them some degree of 'creative spirit'; an awareness of their function and visitor attraction seldom emulated by musical collections. The entertaining and participatory nature - for protagonists and audience in different ways - of theatre is stymied by the purely 'object in a case' mentality. Theatre - like music - is essentially populist, a fact most museums are now keen to articulate in their displays; these museums 'Hope to entertain yet give factual information without

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[331]Of the thirteen additional theatre and performing art collections studied (which included a practical element), six were single subject museums.

[332]'How to be Bottom', Concourse Gallery, the Barbican Centre, October 1994 - January 1995.

being too academic.'[333] The less 'cerebral' the entertainment, the more licence the museum is often able to take with the subject, and, as with music, where *mechanical* music collections are viewed less seriously, these are the collections likely either to be demonstrated or to have a hands-on aspect. Penny Arcadia - 'Magical Museum of Amusement Machines',[334] Pocklington, Yorkshire, is such an example of entertainment mechanised. The museum presents a multi-media show on the history of the exhibits and the amusement-machine industry, with examples of the different types of machine set aside for hands-on. A dance organ and a polyphon playing in the background are used to produce a period atmosphere: the museum is cunningly creating an illusion of more activity than is actually taking place:

> Movement is an integral, essential part of the guided tours. Some of the static displays are on turnstiles revolved in front of the guests and the stage itself is a revolving stage. Not every machine is demonstrated, although most are, and we avoid having those not demonstrated in a block.[335]

Hands-on and demonstration were also favoured at the recently re-housed Puppet Theatre Museum, Abbots Bromley,[336] where performance, above all, was prized. Group visits included an introductory talk of a general nature (or a more detailed one for specialist groups), often using film or slides and a demonstration to taped music of many of the puppet figures performing on stage. Static puppets on show were 'posed' to suggest movement and a box of different types of puppet

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[333]Letter from The Curator, Museum of East Anglican Life [includes material on travelling showmen], Stowmarket, 11.4.94.
[334]About one-hundred and twenty original amusement machines are on display, grouped in categories for easier comparison.
[335]Letter from The Curator, Penny Arcadia, 4.2.94.
[336]Formerly the United Kingdom's only puppet museum. Since the museum closed in October 1993, the whole collection (500 - 600 items), has been transferred to Staffordshire County Museum at Shugbrough to be re-displayed.

able to be handled by the visitor found itself in '... constant use - not only by children!'[337]

> A vital element in the success of the museum has been the ability of the staff to *demonstrate*....If we had the financial resources, I would certainly include videos of selected figures in *performance*.[338]

Where theatrical subject matter is concerned, it is sometimes found that the museum building itself is a part of the exhibition. This was the case at the Puppet Museum, which, as the home of the 'Hayward Marionettes' included its front of house built-in stage and backstage area, as a necessary part of the visitor's tour. The Georgian Theatre Museum,[339] '...the theatre is part and parcel of the museum and vice-versa,'[340] also provides guided tours of the building, and at Moyse's Hall Museum [341]'Live performance is occasionally undertaken where appropriate (for example, a staging of the melodrama *Maria Martin: The Murder in the Red Barn* with original songs, as part of our exhibition relating to that topic.)'[342] It is perhaps easier for museums with a direct association with a theatre or similar establishment, to show their material collections in a practical light: as with many sport museums, the *close proximity* of a venue - from which the artefacts claim their worth - where the *activity* takes place, can do much to enhance the object in the visitor's eye through nothing more than simple association. Music museums, by contrast, have rarely been associated with specific venues; although it would certainly be possible for them to do so *by proxy*, acting upon the well-established and strong sense of identification enjoyed

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[337]Letter from Douglas Hayward(former Director of the Puppet Theatre), 1.2.94.
[338]*Ibid.* The italics are his own.
[339]The Georgian Theatre Museum, Richmond, North Yorkshire contains about six-hundred items of theatrical ephemera within its 1788 theatre building. (1994 attendance 12,500)
[340]Letter from The Curator, The Georgian Theatre Museum, 15.2.94.
[341]St. Edmundsbury Museum Service.
[342]Letter from Keith Cunliffe, Collections Manager, 21.2.94.

by many regional orchestras, music schools and pop groups with areas of the country, to suggest further musical links. It is usual for people to attend a play, a film or a musical concert and *then* to be interested in visiting a museum dealing with that subject: the easiest and most direct way to introduce theatre, or cinema, or music to an individual is still through *performance*. If it is not possible to suggest this within the music collection itself, then these museums should at least seek to *imply* it, through a closer association with local musical societies and venues.

CHAPTER 8

MUSEUMS OF SPORT: ENTERTAINING ACTIVITIES AS MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

The parallels between presenting 'music' and presenting 'sport' in a museum are far closer than might at first be supposed, for each game (or bout of sporting activity) is, in its own way, a 'performance'; it is as active, as transitory and as unique as the playing of a string quartet. It differs from music *per se* only in the key area of being *visual*; and as an activity it has either to be participated in or watched, to give it meaning and purpose; a definition reflected in its interpretation as a museum subject. Most importantly, it shares with music the creative ideal of being entertainment; neither music nor sport are necessary for existence, but have worth and purpose because they enhance our lives as forms of expression about ourselves. The concept of 'enjoyment' is therefore central to any museum's understanding of a sporting subject, and, as with music, following on from this, is the notion of 'popularity' represented by and through the sport, for the museum. Music museums which have been unable or reluctant to acknowledge this area of their musical holdings may learn greatly from sport museums, in their ability to present the subject in a non-elitist way. It is usual for sport museums to focus as much upon contemporary activities as past glories, and in doing so to attract the layperson interested only in the sport as it is played today as much as the historically-aware enthusiast. Sport - in the museums represented here - is perceived as egalitarian in terms of visitor interest (in direct contrast to music), because it may be participated in - both in performance and viewing - at many levels, from professional player to 'armchair' spectator. Although the sport itself may traditionally be one of 'high status'(golf at St Andrews, cricket at Lords), the social-cultural implications so often found in the interpretation of music collections are not as pronounced: vitally, these sport museums do not 'degrade' the

involvement of the armchair sportsman, the populist who contributes the main bulk of any sport's attendants.

It is usual for sport museums to have a strong sense of place. The major sporting museums are invariably identified by a locality that is intrinsically bound to the sporting subject, and may even be viewed as the embodiment of the sport itself. The element of 'pilgrimage' is a core feature of many visitor's journeys to these museums and is one which the museums carefully exploit. The three case-study museums discussed below (the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, the Lord's Cricket Ground MCC Tour and the British Golf Museum) is each an example of a 'shrine' museum and Mecca of its chosen sport. As a group, they differ radically from many other museum genre in that they were devised *deliberately* to reflect both the importance of their sport for a particular locality, and to meet public demand. The commercial bonus of drawing together artefacts and verbal material to form a museum was probably the initial motivating factor in their establishment, facilitating the creation of a venue at which to display an increasing volume of associated paraphernalia, which only with the passing of time has taken on the cultural and historical significance to warrant preserving it in a museological way. The collections are, thus, less bound to the 'historicising process' which is inevitably so often the fate of the historical and academic music collection. Most sporting material artefacts have significance *through association*, not intrinsic value, and for this reason the museums usually choose to interpret them within their greater context and meaning, rather than as curiously valuable 'objects'. The result is not music's 'cabinet of curiosities' but a de-mystification of the object, a metaphorical 'taking it out of the glass case', to give it a role in the overall theme of the museum.

The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum

Sport museums are a recent phenomenon, tending to be restricted to sports with an established mass following (tennis, golf, cricket), a healthy amateur contingent, and a well-defined 'character' created through the medium of public broadcasting. The idea for a permanent Museum of Lawn Tennis at Wimbledon, was germinated by the overwhelmingly enthusiastic public response to a temporary exhibition held in 1972 to commemorate one-hundred years of lawn tennis. Naturally the 'All England Club' at Wimbledon was the most obvious and popular choice of venue for a permanent exhibition, and so a museum proper opened in 1977. As is the case with many sporting museums, the core of the museum's material is a substantial private collection (on permanent loan) with the remainder being either gifted to the museum by tennis supporters from the greater public or acquired by the museum itself.

The layout and interpretation of the collection follows the same system used by the Theatre Museum in having special displays devoted to particular themes with a broadly chronological framework. This approach, 'Proven as being the most coherent method of presentation',[343] allows the 'sporting' visitor detailed access to specific areas, whilst retaining for the layperson a broad sweep of tennis history. The resulting display is self-explanatory, though educational packs for school children and tours for Special Interest Groups can be arranged upon request. The introductory display case 'Things to Come' (stylistically narrow and focused at eye-level), presents in microcosm a chronological conglomeration of objects covering the past hundred years of lawn tennis history. *Above* the case is placed a text giving details about Wimbledon and lawn tennis, as they collate to the

[343]Letter from Valerie Warren, Curator, the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, 17.3.94.

objects in the case below at that point in time; and *below* the case are notes on innovations in tennis from the rest of the world. In this way the individual object is shown in its immediate context (Wimbledon), whilst simultaneously being related to the outside world of sport; and the chronological effect is *visually* attained by suggesting the passage of time through the artefacts themselves. A *balance* between object and text exists, making this an approach which would be well-suited to displays of musical instruments in evolution, allowing the museum to present instrumental, social-historical and instrument design in simultaneous parallel, within an easily understandable format.

The exhibition proper begins its history of lawn tennis by reducing the game to its simplest level. A brief resume of 'Real Tennis' aside, the question of what made lawn tennis possible is summarised by the invention of the lawn-mower and the perfecting of a ball that could bounce. This is presented in the 'expected' museum style of artefact and label against reproduced illustrations on graphic panels, but, as elsewhere in the exhibition, diversity and interest is achieved by juxtaposing this type of display technique with a series of large room settings or tableaux and areas of high-technology and audio-visual exhibits. The 'look' of the exhibition is, thus, not object-bound, with the room settings providing historically-realised input and the audio-video 'live' reproductions of the sport. The large-scale room settings are the most immediately striking features of the display. Presented as a 'time capsule' they act *practically* to contextualise and show a wide variety of objects together, whilst a*esthetically* attempting to capture a scene, an era and an atmosphere. The Edwardian paraphernalia in the setting 'Home for a Family of Tennis Enthusiasts' includes a clutter of ornaments, crockery, pictures and journals with a tennis theme, set out in a sitting-room complete with potted aspidistra. Over eighty individual items may be counted here, the majority of which are not labelled - a feature indicative of a constant museological quandary over the function of room settings. It is unfortunate that any labelling within a

'truthful' historical setting inevitably destroys some of the realism and spontaneity it seeks to achieve. However, in this example, the purpose of the display is clearly for the objects to have impact *en masse*; the individual object is subjugated to the more important statement it is making about the passion for tennis in the early years of the century. By making social-historical concerns integral to the display, it travels beyond the immediate subject of 'tennis' to show how the Victorians-Edwardians sought to make the functional ornamental (the screen covered in tennis-inspired paper 'scraps'); and the modern-day visitor is made conspicuously aware of the sport's popularity - indeed its marketing - bringing the 'historical' into sharp, contemporary focus.

In an account of the sport, which could easily have been woven around a simple collection of tennis balls and rackets, the Wimbledon Museum is notable for being as interested in the social etiquette of the mentality behind the game, as in the practical sport:

> The whole subject is dealt with within the context of the relevant English Social History. This is most important when interpreting the history of sport. A list of who played who and what happened becomes a mere list of names; it's looking at the wider sphere that makes a subject come alive.[344]

For this reason, the museum's temporary Special Exhibition on 'Ladies Dress and Undress for Tennis' concentrates as much upon how tennis as a social act helped to change fashion in general, as the practicalities of tennis costume for genuine play. By using contemporary newspaper reports of that era as text , the costumes transcend being a collection of 'pretty things', to become a social commentary on the mores of the sport. The museum 'object' as such, therefore takes on a quite

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[344] *Ibid.*

different significance. The contextual display 'Model of a Tennis Court c.1895' illustrates this attitude especially well: set against the background of a country house, eight costumed figures act out a game of lawn tennis, each 'character' posed in an activity - players at the net, genteel older ladies taking afternoon tea, a young boy getting himself covered in paint from the line-marking machine - give the whole an air of suspended animation. Victorian middle-class society 'at play', is thus represented in a tableau where the picnic basket has as much significance as the tennis rackets. Within this large-scale diorama, key items are given labels, but the whole scene is an *illustration* in itself and is best understood by reading its accompanying Victorian text:

> The scene should be laid on a well kept garden lawn. There should be a bright warm sun overhead and just sufficient breeze to prevent the day from being sultry. Near at hand, under the cool shadow of a tree there should be strawberries and cream, iced claret mug and a few spectators who do not want to play but are lovers of the game.[345]

The attempt at realism engendered in these displays is carried a stage further in two later room settings. The 'Gents Changing Room c.1900' is superbly impromptu - clothes thrown over a chair, water running in the sink and a back door left ajar as if someone has only just left the room, while the tableau of '1920s Suburbia "Bright Young Things": Their Tennis and Society' includes the radio commentary from the 1934 Wimbledon Final, as if played 'live' from a 1920s wireless and listened to by the tennis-playing models as a background to their game.

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[345]Lieutenant Colonel R.D.Osborn *Lawn Tennis*, (1881). Display label, Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, 1993.

The mechanics of the sport - the manufacture and development in fashion of ball and racket - are shown in small sub-sections within the display. The museum successfully manoeuvres itself away from the anticipated rather dull presentation of endless rows of near-identical artefacts, by placing the emphasis on the *design* of the objects rather than the objects themselves. The manufacture of tennis rackets is discussed, as expected, from the original block of wood (in the earlier examples) to the finished product, by means of a chronological series of rackets, but it is contextualised by the use of a 'Racket-making Workshop c.1900' room setting and, vitally, a Listening Point,'Craftsmanship and Sport', where the visitor hears the experiences of Fred Tournier, who '...followed his father into the racket-making business [and] trained to become a skilled racket-maker and stringer in the East End of London in the 1920s.'[346] This personal touch is beneficial here, with visitors being more inclined to listen to a voice and an anecdote about the making of a tennis racket than they would be to work through a lengthy textual description. The inclusion of oral history suggests spontaneity; it both moves the visitor *away* from the 'object in a case' museum image, whilst *complementing* those same material collections through its practical appreciation of the subject. Some of the themes within the museum are cyclical, so that this section may later be compared with the audio-visual area 'Technology and Tennis', where diagrammatic cross-sections of the modern tennis shoe, and a video breakdown of the design of the modern racket, complement and follow through the earlier exhibit. A later room display of a modern changing room also offers instant comparisons with an earlier Victorian one.

From the 1920s onwards - where archive film and radio broadcasts are available as source material - the museum takes an increasingly documentary turn, employing

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[346]Listening Point 'Introduction', Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, 1993. The few button-operated listening points are optional, providing a 'live' narrative without the use of headsets so that many visitors can listen to it at once. As visitors move away it becomes background noise to the general display.

A 'Racket Maker's Workshop c.1900', a social-historical set-piece at *The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum.*

(Reproduced courtesy of *The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum.*)

photographic stills and video;[347] in doing so, the focus becomes primarily one of images - moving and still - rather than objects, and the ideas of the sport as an *activity* is reinforced. 'The 20s at Wimbledon' features a video showing film of the famous player Suzanne Lenglen in action; a totally active exhibit balanced by an accompanying tennis room setting containing the equipment and accoutrements of that period. With the increased use of technology, the museum continues to mix chronological and thematic sections to demonstrate visually and practically the evolution of the game. Its small 'Video Theatre' (seating about fifty) shows highlights of the latest Wimbledon Championship, balancing the topical with the historical. The museum is clearly committed to bringing its material up-to-date; the contemporary is seen to be as important as the historical *even within a museum* - sport is seen as a continuous and not piecemeal collectable.

The development of audio-visual technology is a key reason in the successful interpretation of the subject in sport museums. The active, transitory nature of sport is captured on and encapsulated in film, indeed most visitors first learn about and follow their sporting pursuits through *broadcasting*; they are pre-conditioned to see sport on film, and, because sport and film are so inextricably bound together in their minds this aspect is taken for granted and becomes even an *expected part* of a museum's realisation of the subject. However, for a museum that still owes its allegiance to *material* artefacts, it now becomes a question of amalgamating the high-tech with the object collection; of introducing the right amount and type of technology to bring to life the material collection, rather than it being deployed simply for its own sake. In this respect, the nearly seamless use of video and hands-on amongst the artefacts in the Wimbledon Museum is exemplary:

> We have taken a view that all 'technical gadgetry' in a museum has to earn its place! The main storyline is presented by means of showcases, set

[347]Original archive film is transferred onto laserdisc or videotape.

> pieces and graphic panels. However, the video laser discs for example are inserted within the graphic panels in relevant places, the effect being of a 'moving photograph' amongst other static photographs etc.[348]

The 'Gallery of Tennis Greats' uses this idea, incorporating the video footage alongside text and photographs in a 'montage' effect, while a further section devoted to specific Wimbledon champions combines the video with a key artefact of more recent vintage (items of tennis dress and shoes donated by Borg, Navratilova and other famous players), bringing the story up to the present day. The concentration on video and movement is deliberate; however, it is not intended in any way to *replace* objects or compensate for a lack of acquisition covering recent times, but to illustrate the history of the game and its players in the most *realistic* manner possible.

> The earlier sections of the storyline, i.e. up to 1920-30 are interpreted through the medium of object based displays; from 1930s to the present day we have found the incorporation of movement to be vital. Objects relevant to the history of the game are of less intrinsic interest and so the 'movement' makes up for this as well as being useful in a museum devoted to 'sport'. Seeing a photograph of tennis players is one thing, but we can learn so much more from a film clip actually showing how he moves![349]

Here the parallels with understanding a musical instrument are obvious: access to the sound an instrument makes is as necessary for true appreciation *and enjoyment* as is the facility to see sport in action. At Wimbledon, a homogenous approach to the subject is apparent, balancing the technology, because the interactive secondary part of the museum also maintains its fascination with

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[348]Letter from Valerie Warren, Curator, Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum, 17.3.94.
[349]*Ibid.*

historical context. A video on 'The Social Scene at Wimbledon 1947-50' is an account of the catering incurred by a Royal Visit (twenty-three tonnes of strawberries and two-hundred thousand sandwiches), and the section on 'Tennis Greats' includes an account by a firewoman on duty at Wimbledon on the night it was hit by bombs during the Second World War. Even in the interactive exhibits included in this section, there exists an equilibrium between the facts of the game and its social scene: one computer database gives details on tennis players, a second is a wide-ranging quiz, and a third focuses on behind the scenes work 'Wimbledon: The Other Fifty Weeks', aside from the famous 'Wimbledon fortnight'.[350]

In the absence of a 'live' game being played for the visitor's benefit, the museum uses sound effects, music and narrative to assist in conjuring a resonant atmosphere for tennis enthusiasts. Some of the effects are simple and obvious - the sound of tennis balls being hit, back and forth as in a game, as a background noise to the 'Gents Dressing Room c.1900' adds immediate 'colour'; but other effects are subtle and emotive - match commentaries made by Dan Maskell,[351] the sound of crowds clapping and cheering. The sound of tennis being played is heard continuously throughout the audio-visual displays, acting as a kind of subliminal, evocative background music, the combined effect being to immerse the visitor in the animation of the game. The museum does not underestimate the power of suggestion to create atmosphere, from which many visitors will judge the 'quality' of their visit. The element of 'pilgrimage' to the museum is encouraged and exaggerated by 'keeping the best 'til last': the final material exhibit of the museum is a case containing the 'Championship Trophies', and this is closely followed by the final active 'exhibit', as a covered-way leads the visitor

[350]As with the audio-visual screens, these interactive computer exhibits are built into the graphic panels of the display to form an integral 'unit' in the look of the display.
[351]Dan Maskell, tennis commentator. For many armchair sportsmen he is immediately identifiable as 'The Voice of Wimbledon'.

out of the museum onto a balcony overlooking Wimbledon's famous Centre Court.[352] Using this design, the route through the museum exhibition and its contents appears to be cumulative; everything has been designed to lead to this crucial and most revered final *purpose* of the game, and its personification as a place.

The British Golf Museum

For many visitors, sport as an active pursuit is indivisible from sport as entertainment through the medium of broadcasting. More usually, sport and its media coverage are part and parcel of the same thing, and for this reason the inclusion of audio-visual technology in museums presenting sporting subjects seems appropriate and natural. It is a method to include the practical soul of the subject in a realistic manner; and it mimics sport's other social purpose as a populist, broadcasting art. This dual-role played by sport is visibly demonstrated in the emphasis placed upon audio-visual 'exhibits' in sports museums. This is most clearly seen in the British Golf Museum, wherein the interpretation of golf through audio-visual means is paramount, indeed, so greatly so that these technological features have taken on the status of 'exhibits' in their own right. In no other museum of this subject matter is the contrast between museum 'object' (in a case) and its role (on audio-visual) so distinct and polarised in its application.

The British Golf Museum, St Andrews, (opened 1990), tells the story of golf in Great Britain and its influences world-wide from the earliest surviving written reference to golf in 1457 to the present day. The exhibition is set out chronologically but runs thematic areas within this (for example 'The History of Ladies Golf', 'The Open', 'Amateur Championships'), although the bulk of the

[352]The Centre Court is left largely to speak for itself. A small diagram pinpoints areas of the court and informs the visitor that 13,107 spectators may be accommodated.

material collection is concerned with the look and development of clubs and balls; and the audio-visual and hands-on areas naturally favour the twentieth century's access to filmed players and championships.

> The story is told by a combination of conventional displays of objects accompanied by text and photographs and state-of-the-art touch-screens.[353]

Arguably it is just such audio-visual input that provides the most *immediate* visitor access to the sport as an activity, as witnessed in the museum's forty-eight seat audio-visual theatre. Dispersed throughout the museum, eleven work stations contain one-hundred and thirty-eight separate programme choices,[354] falling either into the category of 'replay' material in accounts of famous matches and the golfing history of specific players, or into the historical-thematic - 'Golf Fashions', 'The Early Role of Caddies'. If at first the inclusion of so much touch-screen technology appears almost anachronistic in a 'museum' setting, its function soon becomes clear when the poor quality of the text accompanying the material exhibits is examined. Here the development of modern technology has not been used to save the museum from a book-on-the-wall approach, but as an attraction in its own right. Though dealing with the same subject - golf - little thought has been given to ingratiating the computers with the existing material collections, with the result that the objects and the computers seem to belong to different displays, but happen to share the same building. Although the computer programmes '... offer the truly dedicated visitor a plethora of statistics of major championships',[355] and the information they contain is erudite and colourfully presented, by contrast the museum *objects* remain anaemic and dispassionate. If

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[353]Peter Lewis, [Director, the British Golf Museum], *Scottish Museum News*, Winter 1990, p.6.
[354]These programmes use an advanced optical disc technology on interactive compact disc. However, despite this - or perhaps because of it - it is not unusual for one or more of the programmes to be out of order - as witnessed over several visits to the museum.
[355]Peter Lewis, *Scottish Museum News*, Winter 1990, p.6.

a lesson may be drawn from this for music's parallel case, it is that while access to the *practical* nature of sport should - through the medium of modern technology - be included in a museum's account of that subject, it must be *integrated* with the material collection in thought and in practice, if it is to result in a reciprocal alliance of resources.

The chief advantage in using multi-media presentation is that it can store and retrieve a vast volume and array of information - textual and pictorial - in a very small space, to be accessed and observed easily by visitors. Imaginatively used, it can introduce new ways of interpreting a collection by encouraging the visitor to think about the exhibits in a specific or different way, or to encourage him to return to, or look anew. However, it is not and should never be used to become a *replacement* for the object itself; it should instead seek to tell the visitor what an object on its own cannot, by placing the item in its social-historical or practical context - by showing a golf ball as it is hit, or, with music, a violin being played. The British Golf Museum displays in the region of a thousand items,[356] yet the 'glory' of the museum is given over to its computers not its artefacts; and part of the blame for this must rest with the design of the exhibition. In relating the story of the sport, it is natural to wish to portray it in as dynamic and exciting a manner as possible - the emphasis upon touch-screen technology to some extent compensates for a 'repetitive' collection in which about half of the artefacts are either golf balls or clubs - but it is worrying to discover that some of the displays were re-arranged in order to fit-in with the computer designs installed.[357] The 'look' of a museum's layout of material is crucial to its success, but whereas the Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum made a point of *incorporating* its audio-visual

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[356]The museum numbers its collection at 'several thousand', with a large proportion in store.

[357]By Philips Electronics, the manufacturers and sponsors of the touch-screen computers. As an independent museum, it is understandable that the sponsor's company is able to demand a high profile, but questionable if it is really benefiting the material exhibits at the same time. (Other funding comes from the Royal and Ancient Golf Club and the Scottish Tourist Board.)

material into the body of its object display, resulting in an equilibrium between object and visual to tell a continuous story, the British Golf Museum treats the entities wholly separately. Though, extensibly, the museum was purpose-built to house a collection, it gives the impression of having been constructed around its computer gadgetry rather than its objects. It is understood that designers are not curators; however, the best use of the material *visually* is subjugated to the greater 'look' of the exhibition - and its touch-screens. Although previously it has been argued that not enough attention has been given to promoting *practically-oriented* museum subject matter, (namely that of music, while sport museums appear far more practically aware), it is still realised, and maintained, that these material artefacts constitute the core and *raison d'être* of any museum collection: it would not be possible to have a sport *museum* consisting solely of film and video footage, or, equally, a musical museum (with the obvious exception of a sound archive) relying only upon recordings. The idea is not to negate the value of the museum object, but to draw it out.

If this brief appraisal of the British Golf Museum appears overtly negative, it is not because it is a 'bad' museum - the practical essence of the sport is excellently represented through the touch-screen facility - but because it compares less favourably with other museums - such as Wimbledon - in its ability to integrate technology with original collections in order to explore and enhance them. Paradoxically, although it strives to be popular 'a day out for all the family',[358] and promotes the entertainment value of its computer exhibits as an attraction in itself, the resulting display is specialist not egalitarian. Aficionados of the game may be quite confident as they knowledgeably skim through the computer programmes, but the golfing novice and more general visitor[359] may well feel

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[358]Leaflet, *The British Golf Museum*, (1994).

[359]Interestingly, the largest proportion of the audience for the British Golf Museum is the 'St Andrews day visitor'; the tourist market rather than the enthusiasts attending tournaments.

overwhelmed by a volume of detail that has not been put into context for them in the object displays. The simplest facts and terminology of the game that might have come within the gambit of the novice - Why *eighteen* holes on a golf course?, What do 'Birdies' and 'Eagles' mean?, are not explained; as with many music collections, a great deal of previous knowledge is assumed. Most relevant information *is* stored and may be accessed via the computer system; but, though the system is assuredly user-friendly, the visitor has to know *how* to articulate the terminology of what he is looking for in order to choose which programme to turn to for that information. The appeal to the non-golfer is, thus, negligible.

Lord's Cricket Ground MCC[360] Museum and Tour

The overall success of a sport museum rests, perhaps - as does music - in persuading the non-specialist or enthusiast that the subject could even be enjoyed by them:

> You don't have to be a cricket lover to be thrilled by Lord's. When you tour this world-famous arena you tread in the footsteps of the giants of the game - cricketers like W.G.Grace, Jack Hobbs, Don Bradman....The museum is a treasure trove of cricketing history. The Long Room is a shrine for players and from the world over. The home of cricket![361]

The Lord's Cricket Ground MCC Museum and Tour[362] is the most traditional of the three sport museums discussed here in placing its object collection at centre

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[360]Marylebone Cricket Club.
[361]Leaflet, *Lord's Cricket Ground MCC*, (1993).
[362]A 'satellite' cricket museum to Lord's might be observed in Thirsk Museum, the building where Thomas Lord was born in 1755. It contains a substantial object-based display on the history of cricket and on local clubs from the 1880s to the present day, alongside a number of commemorative plates, trophies and general memorabilia. There is a bi-annual rotation of material (mainly photographs). Thirsk is a small, independent local history museum, attracting about two-thousand visitors per year, a number of whom are cricket enthusiasts making a pilgrimage to Lord's birthplace.

stage and in using a minimum of technological involvement. The practical nature of the sport is, nevertheless, also ably presented by means of a tour of the grounds and buildings - each part steeped in cricketing lore - and seen as being as important and integral a part of a visit to Lord's as the artefacts in the museum. Though the museum's visitors are predominantly cricket enthusiasts and MCC members[363] (with whom the pilgrimage element is strongest), the museum aims to provide informative and accessible displays, which may be understood by a more general audience as well. It is helped in this by the provision of guided tours to the museum and the grounds,[364] where the guide's commentary may be adjusted to suit the degree of knowledge and interest of any particular visitor group.

The tour begins with a social-historical perspective on cricket in general and the Lord's ground in particular, presented in the auspicious - normally members only - surroundings of the famous 'Long Room'. Chronologically, the guide relates cricket's history using the many paintings found lining the walls of this semi-gallery, to encapsulate the different periods and individuals involved in the evolution of the game, from the foundation of the ground by Thomas Lord in 1777 to the present day. (Indeed, through the museum the MCC continues to commission paintings of living players; creating tomorrow's history through the collection). Cases of memorabilia also line the walls, consisting mainly of bats, balls and commemorative china, each representative of specific player or occasion. Here, labels have been kept to a minimum (a player's name, a date), the visitor relying upon the guide to elucidate upon selected items; but this approach seeming to enhance the shrine-like quality of the 'Long Room's' purpose, in which the objects are not of innate value but worthy through association: the

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(Information supplied by J.C.Harding, Honorary Secretary, Thirsk Museum Society, 28.2.94.)

[363]There is also a large contingent of overseas visitors from cricket playing countries - especially Australia.

[364]Lord's Cricket Ground and Museum are privately owned by the Marylebone Cricket Club. The Gestetner Tour of Lord's is run by the Gestetner Company under a franchise from the MCC. A tour lasts about one to one and a half hours.

majority of the objects herein have been gifted by individuals associated with the game rather than purchased. Placed within this setting the 'Long Room' neatly encapsulates both the historic and the contemporary aspects of the game, for while the paintings and objects speak of an historical - though on-going - lineage, the 'Long Room' also overlooks the cricket ground itself, giving a perfect view of the game *as it is played.* The activity of the game thus balances the 'objects in cases' within this museological exploration; here the visitor is treated to a spectacle of something live and 'performed'[365] in a way that is absent from its musical counterparts.

To some extent the employment of a guide to take visitors around the Memorial Gallery Museum at Lord's is superfluous,[366] for the museum is comprehensively labelled and straightforward in format - the lower of its two floors, a chronological display of cricket history, and the upper floor containing various thematic showcases[367] which are changeable, to include more contemporary material.[368] First opened in 1953, the museum presents a traditional museological account of cricket from 1550 onwards, through artefacts, text and photographs. However, though object-based throughout, care has been taken to describe and contextualise the objects through *practically* descriptive, performance-related text: the artefacts are always viewed in the light of cricket as a participatory and popular pursuit, and never simply as objects of merit through association, as they were in the 'Long

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[365]The visitor may witness a practice game, maintenance work, or just simple movement about the grounds by MCC members: all reinforce the notion of the sport as an active concern. On the occasion of my visit the pitch was being re-turfed, and even this seemed to add to the *frisson* of watching from the 'Long Room'.

[366]It was also of irritation that the length of time allotted by the guide to the museum section of the Lord's Tour did not allow the visitor - as in my own case - sufficient time to view everything properly. Nor was it possible for visitors to return to the museum at a later stage in the Tour, or to be there without the presence of the guide.

[367]The collection contains about 2,500 items of which about fifteen per cent are usually in store. (Information supplied by Glenys Wilhame, Assistant Curator, Lord's Cricket Ground Museum, 4.2.94).

[368]For example, in 1993 an 'Australian Exhibition' was included to coincide with the 1993 Australia Tour.

Room'. Especially notable objects and textual stories of cricketing lore are highlighted by the guide - the tiny trophy containing 'The Ashes', the letters debating the Jardine 'Bodyline' controversy - in a tone that is conspicuously social-historical. As a background, the museum walls are filled with paintings of the game *in action*, acting as a constant reminder of activity within the museum surroundings, as the view over the grounds from the 'Long Room' did earlier on. The museum's interpretation of the rules of the game and its techniques in play is also overwhelmingly social-historical in outline, relating the game's evolution through famous protagonists (such as W.G.Grace), via a synopsis of their career. (A ploy to make the technical more approachable which could easily be adopted by music museums by using key composers pitched against the musical innovations of their particular age.) Separate displays show how a cricket ball and bat are made, but unlike the British Golf Museum, this is clearly viewed as a necessary yet minor part of the exhibition; and what the ball and bat *do* in practice is of far greater concern. To this end, historical-practical information on 'The Art of Bowling, Wicket Keeping and Fielding' is illustrated through text and a number of striking life-size figures, 'posed' in each of these activities. Contemporary photographs of these actions introduce a further 'live' element into the museum, breaking down the various techniques into understandable movements and styles. Following on from this section, a collection of 'flick-through' wall-mounted boards containing many hundreds of 'action' photographs of famous cricketers, concludes the exhibition; although it is likely that only the visiting enthusiast would bother to search out a player or know for whom to look. This type of exhibit - now more commonly found on a computer database - embodies the museum's use of simple techniques rather than technological facilities; indeed, the museum's sole concession to the high-tech, a 'talking head' of W.G.Grace who welcomes the visitor into the museum,[369] is clearly a gimmick rather than an integral part of the display. As has been described, activity and movement is

[369]Not in operation on the day of my visit.

implied through other means; and the visitors, as devotees of the game, are encouraged by the museum to investigate for themselves through their own amateur participation, cross-referencing the museum with their own experiences.

The Lord's Museum succeeds in compiling a systematic appraisal of its subject, both in the balance achieved between historical and practical context and in the technicalities of the game. If anything, the museum's bias is weighted towards contemporary matters rather than the historic; and in this, it is the antithesis of most musical collections, where modern material - for many reasons - is scarce and too often included as little more than a gesture. Although, at present, the historical section of the Lord's Museum reaches as far as c.1980 - Where is the musical museum which can claim this? - it is intended even to up-date this:[370] the popularity of the game and its players must be reflected by the museum in the creation of a contemporary cutting edge, for it to have relevance for a modern audience. That the visitor has an *interest* in the game (if not a thorough knowledge), is the museum's basis for interpretation: despite its visitors being predominately enthusiasts, the Rules of Cricket (of c.1784) are still provided, the method of bowling explained; whereas in music museums the construction of a symphony and the technique of playing a musical instrument is all too often *assumed* to be understood, or, far worse, considered to be 'too basic' for explanation within any historically prestigious collection.

The final part of the visitor's tour of Lord's consists, somewhat confusingly, of a visit to a 'Real Tennis Court',[371] *en route* to a brief survey of the cricket ground itself: as with Wimbledon, the chance to view or tread upon the hallowed ground is regarded as the pinnacle and finale of an individual's visit. Here, the guide

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[370]As mentioned by Glenys Wilhame, Assistant Curator, Lord's Cricket Ground Museum, 4.2.94.

[371]This is an incidental part of the tour, included out of general interest and the rarity value of being able to see a 'Real Tennis Court'. During my visit, we were fortunate to see a game being played, adding to the 'practical' aspect of the Lord's Tour in general.

describes the activities of the MCC[372] and its regulations regarding membership, placing the historic grounds in a distinctly contemporary framework;[373] and it is also an opportunity for visitors to ask any final questions of their own. However, the overriding impression of the tour as the visitor departs is a *sense* of Lord's and the game itself.

In comparing the merits of museums presenting sporting material with those of musical material, the relative success of the former in dealing with a potentially problematic museological subject has been made possible through adopting a less object-centred approach. Objects - rightly so - may still be the key to, and focus of these museums, but the *attitude* towards them is not the near 'deification' of objects *as* objects so often found in musical collections, but of objects with a practical function and a social-historical story to tell. The three case-study museums discussed here are each large-scale and prestigious, with material and resources which can facilitate new approaches; and yet the germ of this less object-reverential attitude may also be found in small-scale sport museums and minor sporting collections. Even with only a handful of artefacts (or very limited resources), these museums too strive to give meaning to the sport concerned by never considering the object in isolation. At Chepstow Museum,[374] for example, this takes the form of social-historical contextualisation in a thematic display of photographs, badges and ephemera devoted to local sporting groups and clubs:[375]

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[372]At all times, visitors are reminded that although Lord's is an historic place, it is still a private and active club. 'MCC members welcome all groups and individual visitors but would appreciate your acceptance of the Club's customs.' (Leaflet *Lord's: An Invitation to the MCC Tour*, 1993.)

[373]Membership is open to men over the age of seventeen - but there is currently [1993] a twenty-eight year waiting list.

[374]Chepstow Museum is a museum of local history attracting mainly local people and day visitors.

[375]A similar scenario may be found at the local history Much Wenlock Museum, where a thematic display of about thirty items recounts the story of the 'Wenlock Olympic Movement'. The museum also co-operates with the current Wenlock Olympia Society on special museum talks and tours. (Information received from The Curator, Much Wenlock Museum, 9.2.94.)

> Sport is shown as an aspect of local people's lives. It is not the sport itself which is the subject of the display but local people's involvement in it and its relevance to the local community at different times....The emphasis is on when particular sports became popular, the clubs that were formed locally and their development and the people locally who were involved or excelled.[376]

The Chepstow Museum gallery looks at sport as entertainment; it is deliberately adjacent to a display on 'Chepstow at Work' with the idea that the twin concerns of leisure and employment will work in juxtaposition. This is indicative of a further reason for the success of the sport museum: a realisation that, above all, sport is an entertainment in both participation and viewing, and that *amateur* interest and involvement is of as much importance - if not more so - than professional prowess. The majority of visitors to sport museums will be 'amateurs' in some form, whether players or armchair enthusiasts; it is to *them* that the museum must appeal. The hierarchical and status-conscious attitude so often encountered implicitly and explicitly in musical collections is not mirrored in their sporting equivalents. These museums demonstrate that it *is* possible to portray active - though historical - material from a contemporary and populist standpoint, without compromising either the integrity of the subject's sense of history or the artefacts themselves.

Finally, and most obviously, sport museums work as museological subject matter because they have recognised that the gist of their subject is *active* and that movement must play a major role within any interpretation in order to do justice both to the artefacts, and to the visitors' understanding of them. The suggestion of sport as an active thing can take many different forms in display, depending upon each individual museum's ideas and resources. It may be as basic as

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[376]Questionnaire received from Anne Rainsbury, Curator, Chepstow Museum, (23.2.94).

performance-oriented, socially-conscious text relating the object to its wider sphere, contextual room-settings, posed figures and photographs of 'play'; or as complex as audio-visual archive and contemporary film footage, computer databases and hands-on explorations will allow. In the small photograph and memorabilia-centred James Gilbert Rugby Football Museum,[377] for example, visitors can watch a craftsman hand-stitching a rugby football; while at the Irish Horse Museum,[378] visitors can relate the textual display, artefacts and video footage to a practical 'museum' site, featuring paddocks, stables, fouling unit, saddlery and forge. In this manner, each sporting museum includes practical input to some extent - to the best of its ability.

The advantages enjoyed by such on-site sport museums, in endowing the museum object with meaning for the sporting pilgrim or novice through association and ambience with place, are undisputed. Music museums, without this 'sense of place' for the creation of music, should therefore be striving even harder to include practical, performance-aware information within their object-rich displays. Sport museums - as with those of film and theatre - may be relatively recent contenders in the museological roll-call, and free from much of the 'historicising process' which is the inevitable fate of older, established collections such as music; but in their holistic approach to their subjects, there is much for music collections to emulate, both in attitude and in practice, for the future.

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[377]The James Gilbert Rugby Football Museum at Rugby is an independent museum attracting players and armchair enthusiasts, predominantly.

[378]The Irish Horse Museum, Tully, County Kildare. The museum houses about sixty items and '...traces the history of the horse in Ireland using artefacts, illustrations and text to relate the story.' It is set-out chronologically from Pre-history to the present day, using themed sections on among others, 'The History of Road Transport', 'Hunting' and 'Racing and Show-Jumping' all of which are designed to be put into context by the on-site nature of the museum. A broad cross-section of visitors is attracted and guided tours are available. (Questionnaire received from Gay Brabazon, Curator, the Irish Horse Museum, 10.2.94.)

CHAPTER 9

CONCEPT MUSEUMS: THE PRESENTATION OF PRINCIPLES, IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES WITHIN A MUSEUM CONTEXT

Although, to a greater or lesser extent, all museum displays contain 'principles, ideas and experiences' either implicitly or explicitly, a number of specific museum subjects and type of museum exist, which, respectively, lend themselves to or embody the idea of a 'concept' museum. By this, the term 'concept' museum is used to define either a museum which examines non-visible or non-concrete concerns through their *principles* and *ideas*; or which seeks to emulate or re-create *experiences* or *states of being* within the museum medium. Such museological interpretation of material has many valid implications for music *proper*, which is transitory, non-visible, greatly instilled with practical and theoretical principles, and is, perhaps, more immediately emotive and participatory (through the art of listening) than any other subject.

Two distinct categories of concept museum may be identified. The first type, looking at ideas and principles, is most obviously embodied in the example of the 'science' museum. From the vast spectrum of subject matter these museums contain, the area of 'Communications' has been chosen for the purposes of this chapter as being representative of a scientific area dealing both with 'concepts' in general and their subsequent application. Additionally, this subject area has a further relevance and link to music in that it is concerned with the 'transfer of information'; whilst also relating to the subject *practically*, through the principles controlling its physics and acoustics - the nature of sound itself.

Above all, concept museums are of importance to this study because they view their collections - the museum *objects* - in an ideological way, rather than being of

worth purely as important *material* artefacts. This is especially apparent in the second type of concept museum, the 'experience' museum, where the objects function to help re-create an atmosphere or symbolically illustrate the lives of their subjects, by reflecting the *social* concerns of that subject, in preference over any other meaning or approach. It has already been shown that the social history and practical nature of the musical instruments which constitute the primary interest of music collections within the United Kingdom has been neglected in the past; and it is clear that 'music' - if it is to be satisfactorily displayed - should include far more of this conceptual material than exists at present: the experience of composing music, performing, and even simply listening itself, are all integral to any true understanding of the subject. The opportunity to introduce a 'conceptually-slanted' approach into a music collection should be an exciting prospect, for an alternative perspective on the subject is long overdue; and, crucially, *this* is the approach and attitude most likely to benefit the *general* museum visiting public. This is not to suggest that all music museums become musical 'theme parks' - for certainly some 'experience' museums are blatantly commercial - but it *is* necessary to re-define many historical and object-based music collections in order to 'humanise' them in the eyes of the greater public. Musical instruments, in particular, need to be rescued from their accustomed role of 'objects in cases', to become, instead, items once loved, played and having *belonged.*

The successful application of the conceptual approach in museums - whether as a method of interpretation for a single idea-centred topic, or as a mentality underlying a whole museum's objectives - relies upon a re-appraisal of the museum object itself; and it is probably for this reason that music museums (whose objects *as* objects are usually held in the highest esteem), have been reluctant - or simply unwilling - to attempt this. The theoretical ideas-motivated type of concept museum is, in comparison, generally less object-centred, because

the objects are usually subjugated into becoming the means by which an *idea* or *principle* is put across to its visitors; while the 'experience' or 'state of being' concept museum completely re-interprets the objects by placing them in a contextual light. Here the objects are used to provide not just tangible evidence of themselves as objects with a story, but to convey an *impression* - the 'experience' - of that story to the visitor. The aim of such concept museums is, however, not to devalue the object in any way, but to re-define it, in order to realise any subject that demands more than a simple grouping of artefacts. Music, clearly, is such a subject.

In the following case-studies, it will be argued that the use of a conceptual approach towards a sympathetic subject frequently results in a more unified and understandable account of that subject, than does a purely object-based rendition. The ability of concept museums to make, for example, scientific principles both interesting and accessible to the general public, is far more successful than the record of their musical counterparts in imparting knowledge about the properties of music. The emotive and participatory aspect of visitors feeling involved with and stimulated by the museum object (as exemplified, in the secondary type of 'concept' museum) is similarly lacking. To discuss this, the scientific principles and processes of 'Communications' are personified by the Story of Telecommunications and the Science Museum's 'Telecommunications Gallery'; and from an extensive spectrum of 'experience' concept museums, the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood has been chosen to illustrate the re-definition of the museum object, as it moves from material artefact to become a catalyst for interpretation . Finally, the commercial and populist aspects of the conceptual Guinness World of Records will be weighed against its success as an interpreter of a non object-led subject.

The Story of Telecommunications

The independent, British Telecom-owned Story of Telecommunications, London, (founded 1978), is essentially a 'collection' of ideas: the *idea* of communication, *the creative process* of invention and the *scientific procedures* making this possible. As a 'story', it aims to convey the idea of a specific method of communication - a concept - by drawing upon objects within a museological setting. These objects still remain interesting and important in their own right, but create a greater impression of their worth in being used as a medium through which the *ideas* surrounding them can be expounded. After introducing the subject with a definition, ('Telecommunications' means '...to communicate at a distance by transmitting signals between two places by one means or another'),[379] the material is divided into two separate displays: the Upper Gallery of the museum is historical, tracing chronologically the history of telecommunications from 1700 to the present day; and the Lower Gallery is practical and thematic,[380] using specific examples of communication technology to illustrate particular innovations, rather than attempting a comprehensive survey. The curator explains:

> There is a need for a historical story for laypeople, and themes cannot easily be developed in this type of interpretation - hence the separate floor for this.[381]

To this end, visitors are advised to tackle the historical Upper Gallery first in order to gain an overview and become familiar with the basic principles and terminology of the subject. Few museums differentiate between the historical and

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[379]Introductory label, the Museum of Telecommunications, 1993.
[380]The themes are: 'Radio', 'Telegraph', 'Emergency Calls', 'Maritime', 'Networks', 'Exchanges' and 'Telephones'.
[381]Letter from The Curator, the Story of Telecommunications, 23.2.94.

the practical quite so distinctly; however, where the integration and contextualisation of ideas and material is usually proclaimed as an enriching experience for the museum object, it is also possible - with a subject such as this - to separate them, and to develop what might be termed a 'two-tier' system. The highly conceptual and technical nature of 'telecommunications' provides more than enough material for two such parallel approaches to be taken. It succeeds because the two approaches are treated symbiotically; and the galleries relate to each other reciprocally instead of becoming semi-autonomous. In this it is, therefore, an approach that would be feasible for any fairly substantial music collection to undertake - one gallery devoted to history and context and a second examining musical sound in creation and performance - if it wished to simplify previously inaccessible musical holdings for a more general rather than specialist visitor audience.

Having decided upon using an individual *history* gallery, the museum has been wary to avoid it becoming a purely 'book-on-the-wall' exploration of telecommunications; and so it is 'disguised' by the deployment of striking graphics and labelling, sound effects and several hands-on devices, and a number of choice artefacts. The use of graphic panels is particularly noteworthy, acting as a mediator between 'history' and 'object' through illustrated texts containing, for example, passages from the 'Queen's [Victoria's] Royal Acts' accounting for the laws governing patents; while from the ceiling banners descend featuring contemporary quotations from that era, both 'for' and 'against' such newly patented inventions as 'the telephone'. The banners also serve a practical purpose, taking up usually unused gallery space and leaving the display cases uncluttered within the confines of the museum's limited exhibition space. As 'incidental' display devices, the information they contain is absorbed less consciously than by reading additional labels, and the display avoids the look of being 'overwritten'.

Typically, the exhibition format introduces an era through a generic textual account (for example, 'The Electricians'); then places it in its historical context (the 'discovery' of electricity in the eighteenth century and the development of the 'Natural Sciences'); using diagrams to explain these early experiments, which are often linked to a simplified hands-on model ('Oersted's Electromagnetism Experiment') for the visitor to try. In this manner, the history and the *idea* of a telecommunication form is followed through as a story; and always with a *practical* outcome.

It is vital to its understanding that underpinning all of the exhibits and text in this gallery is a strong sense of social history. Indeed, *this* is the gallery's motivating factor - the need of people to be able to communicate - as scientific *principles* are turned into technological *inventions* for the visitors' appraisal. With this in mind, social concerns -unlike music's example - run consistently through the displays: the telegraph machine is described not only in its practical terms, but also its role in the early emancipation of women who became telegraph operators. The use of associated material and contextualised exhibits is also pronounced: under the premise that 'nothing advances technology as rapidly as war', a display on the importance of military communication during the First World War shows a life-size recreation of a dug-out and its telephone equipment in use; and later, gas masks and letters of thanks to the 'telephone girls' of the Second World War, are included in a display on 'Telegrams' - the display case itself 'taped' in a distinctive diamond pattern, in anticipation of a 'bomb blast'.

Throughout the gallery, posters and advertisements are used liberally to provide colour and visual interest, whilst simultaneously enhancing the text. However, more importantly, they also serve to relate the history of telecommunication's inventions to the broader history and incidents of everyday life with which the

average visitor will be acquainted. In this way, for example, an account of the growth of wordwide communication technology in the 1960s also makes reference to landmarks in the wider world: 1961 - the Berlin Wall, 1963 - the assassination of President Kennedy, 1969 - the first moon landing. A selective use of sound effects, music and voices further helps to colour or personify a specific venue or era: the distant sound of trains, issuing from the 'Victorian Railway Telegraph Office' adds resonance to the telegraphy display; and under the section 'The GPO Reorganises', a 1930s musical film *The Fairy of the Phone* [382] (played on a video screen set into a 'classic' red telephone box), embodies much of the whimsical charm of that period in its early publicity campaigns.[383] (Adjacent to this is a hands-on area of period telephones which the visitor can dial, either to hear a short recording on their history or to be 'put through' to the 'local exchange', situated in the gallery below.)[384] The history of telephone advertising is later brought up-to-date by featuring modern telephone designs, and a case of the illustrated 'phone cards' which have become collectors' items - in the manner of 'cigarette cards' - for a newly technological generation.

The concluding display in the Upper Gallery, is an 'Activity Point' 'for you to discover more about the workings and development of telecommunications.'[385] This takes the form of a number of computer databases which back up all of the themes discussed in the galleries, and are designed to be changed or up-dated as any new technology in telecommunications is introduced. The application of communication technology and its component particulars (for example, 'Early Valves and Transistors'), may be accessed in this way, in far greater detail than the broad sweep of contents the exhibition space of the museum allows. In this way,

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[382]A twelve minute film made by the prolific GPO Film Unit c.1935 to show subscribers how to make the most of their telephones.
[383]The number of telephones in Great Britain quadrupled in a twenty year period to over twenty million by 1940.
[384]When in the Lower Gallery, this mechanism can be seen at work if someone 'puts through' a call.
[385]Label, the Story of Telecommunications, 1993.

the more technically-minded visitors can satisfy their curiosity and the main gallery remains informative, but not swamped by technical detail.[386]

Descending a staircase whose walls imaginatively depict a 'frieze' of Morse Code dots and dashes, undulating sine waves and pictures of early telephones, the visitor reaches the Lower Gallery and the *practical* exploration of telecommunications. Here, in contrast to the chronology of the Upper Gallery, the displays are thematic and may be viewed in any order. A combination of object, text and hands-on is used consistently throughout each of the thematic sections, working as equal partners in telling the story of each type of telecommunication. In the 'Telephone' section, for example, the way a telephone receiver transmits sound to the ear is shown using basic diagrams and language, both pared down to a necessary minimum: (the rapid vibrations of the telephone 'diaphragm' push and pull the surrounding air, creating sounds identical to those spoken at the other end of the wire.) Following on from this, the seemingly complex telephone itself is broken down into its five basic units: a) a transmitter, b) a receiver, c) a means of attracting attention to an incoming call (for example, by a bell), d) a means of indicating to the exchange that a call is about to be made, and e) a power supply. The apparent ease with which physical properties and their applied technology is explained through the use of commonplace language, succeeds in making previously occlusive material accessible to the layperson. This stratagem could easily be adopted to the cause of musical instrument collections, by describing first, how sound waves are created by an instrument, and second, to show how it functions, by diagramatically (or physically) taking the instrument apart.[387]

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[386]According to the curator, the gallery displays are targeted to be understood by the general public, from 'age twelve onwards'.

[387]This refers, obviously, not to historic artefacts but to a replicas or models. Also, only a few instruments (models) would be needed to illustrate this point: both the principles governing sound's production and the basic component parts of a musical instrument remain fairly constant across generic groups. A single representative of the

For the interested museum visitor, the hands-on features within the various thematic sections of this gallery provide a logical next step in understanding, after the principles of any telecommunication invention have been explained. Visitors may type out a message in Morse Code, create their own fax machine message and use a teleprinter or telex machine; once again *following through* the story of an initial *idea*. In comparison, the interpretation of many music museums' *practical* material appears disappointingly stilted; rarely taking the story of a musical instrument, or a life story, to its logical conclusion, by providing the visitor with an opportunity to play, compose or simply listen - to *participate* in some way for themselves - in the music's true identity. The advantages of learning 'through play', by using three-dimensional models and interactive exhibits, makes the learning of principles and technology enjoyable rather than 'academic', especially within the oft-perceived 'seriousness' of a museum environment.[388] A collection of original telecommunications artefacts on its own may be extensive and erudite in content, but it is through the use of the supplementary *created exhibits* required when dealing with 'concepts', that the primary artefacts here are instilled with meaning - a lesson musical instrument collections have yet to learn.

The Science Museum

From its title at the outset, the Science Museum, London, embodies 'concepts' realised in museum form, for all scientific procedure and produce is based upon principles and ideas. Although, as a *museum*, the Science Museum collects and

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wind, brass, string and percussion families -of any culture - could exemplify all of the key features.

[388]This is, of course, especially true for younger museum visitors. the Story of Telecommunications is a well-established and popular venue for school parties to learn about a complex subject in an approachable way. Unlike many musical equivalents, prior knowledge about the subject is not *assumed*.

interprets *artefacts*, it is the discovery and practical use of 'science' which provides the bedrock of the museum's content in its displays. The museum's exhibition on 'Telecommunications', covers much the same ground as the Story of Telecommunications, but with the benefit of a far greater gallery space in which to exhibit more large-scale and hands-on material in addition to the core collection.[389] The layout of the exhibition is chronological, providing a study of the technical innovations in communication from the early days of railway and telegraph (c.1830), to its developments for the contemporary computer age (c.1980). Throughout the exhibition, *methods* (for example, the *act* of transmitting by wire, cable, radio-wave or optical fibre), are balanced by *usage* (telegraph, telephones, radio): principles are balanced by practice.

Any description of 'Telecommunications' would seem to necessitate a focus on technology, however, the Science Museum's first words on this subject are about the *human* need for communication; and it is from this humanist perspective that the collection is subsequently viewed. The exhibition attempts to *connect* with its visitors by seeing the subject through their eyes and experiences. To this end - as befits a largely aural (and oral) subject - live sound, sound effects and narrative are used fairly extensively in the displays: The visitor enters the gallery to be greeted by the sound of many voices, all speaking in different languages, '...a glimpse of people keeping in touch around the clock'.[390] The first object-focused display takes the form of a room setting (one of several room or 'tableau' settings in the gallery), and is typical of the gallery's cross-referencing of object and social history. The scene, a 'Telegraph Office c.1850', shows the physical context of the telegraph equipment against the period detail of associated objects. The adjacent textual and graphic panels describing the history of the telegraph are

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[389]Though not immediately apparent to visitors, the 'Telecommunications' exhibition is really spread over two galleries, the first historical and object-centred and the second predominantly practical and hands-on.

[390]Introductory label, 'Telecommunications Gallery', the Science Museum, 1993.

supplemented by head-sets featuring two different 'oral history' accounts, which relate at some length [391] either a description of the 'Telegraph Office' as a working environment [392] or the process of receiving a telegram.[393] In addition, archive photographs of early telegraph offices and machinery are used as a background to the more traditional display cases containing further telegraph objects; and in doing so, the objects are never entirely removed from their context. Here also the graphic panels and text used to accompany the material exhibits are punctuated by social comment, even within otherwise quite technical descriptions. The inclusion of archival cartoons - usually derogatory - act as a more potent social commentary on the impact made by the 'newfangled' telecommunication inventions than would any purely textual account. (Sadly, in comparison, the cartoons and satirical monologues lampooning the history of musical politics and invention - Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner are prime examples -[394] are hardly ever found in musicological display.) Similarly, photographic evidence of people 'discovering', designing and reaping the benefits of telecommunications, are also found extensively in this gallery, interpolated among the material exhibits. In this way, sometimes potentially dull or verbose subjects are given a fresh perspective through their association with visual images. A display on 'The Life and Times of Cable Workers' succeeds through such an approach; one which could certainly be adapted as a less predictable method of interpreting musical instrument collections.

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[391]Each account (on a loop system tape) lasts about four minutes.

[392]This description is given 'in character' as a personification of Charles Walker, Telegraph Superintendent to the 'South Eastern Railway', who gives a general description of the Tonbridge Telegraph Office.

[393]This is a technical description (not in character) of the Tonbridge Telegraph Offices, explaining how a telegraph comes into the office and is processed through the machinery by the clerk.

[394]The later nineteenth-century is particularly rich in such examples, as many musicians affiliated themselves either to the established 'Classical' or the new 'Romantic' ideologies and sound. Later, the *avant garde* music of composers such as Richard Strauss, Schoenberg and the 'Viennese School' prompted even further debate amongst musicians, the public and the press.

The successful ability of a museum to make complex material appear simple, or to encourage curiosity where pedantry might be expected to dampen it, is crucial in dealing with a subject such as 'Telecommunications'. For this reason, many of the titles and sub-titles of the more 'difficult' sections within the gallery have been designed to 'lead' the visitor into the subject. The section 'Are Two Paths Better than One?' [on changing unit frequencies], breaks up the topic into smaller and more interesting sounding sub-sections: 'The Quest for Higher Frequencies' , 'The Trailblazing No.10 Set' ,'Radio Under Stress'[maritime],'State of the Art 1939','Between the Wars', 'The Transition to Electronics' and 'The Pre-Electric Era'. Similarly, when discussing social rather than technical themes, the museum will often invest that theme with a sense of discovery and participation for the visitor by presenting it as a question rather than a fact: 'What was it like to be a wireless operator in World War One?'[395] embodies the conceptual approach to the subject; it is concerned with the *experience, not* the object, and forces the object to be exhibited and viewed in a different way. The use of questions is deliberately *active*, helping to bring an historical area to life, by rescuing it from the often inert 'objective-historical' style of labelling, thereby encouraging the visitors to *think*. Using this idea, displays such as the 'World War One' example, now become sympathetic to a more empathic handling; it transcends being an object-centred 'Use of Communications in Wartime' exhibit by combining its objects with oral history (reminiscences of wartime wireless operators),[396] to achieve a personal, broader appreciation of purpose, experience and technical use. By contrast, music and musical instruments are too often presented in isolation as if they have 'created' themselves; their human interaction and function is assumed or ignored.

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[395]Label, 'Telecommunications Gallery', the Science Museum, 1993.
[396]From the archives of the Imperial War Museum.

In looking at a subject as complex as 'Telecommunications', the Science Museum demonstrates that the greater the volume of technical information required, the more expedient it is to off-set this with striking *visual* stimuli in the graphic panels, hands-on material and choice of the artefacts themselves. The gallery's extensive use of models and small 'tableau' setting is a continuation of this idea, moreso, when the technological apparatus involved is not particularly interesting in its own right[397] but takes on a meaning within a setting; for example, an illustration of 'Radio Flight' featured a cross-section of the cockpit from a 'Lancaster Bomber', complete with sound effects and simulated movement. Occasionally these room settings also use the simple device of learning by contrast: a large video screen invites the visitor to 'Watch for ten seconds and see a century slip by',[398] revealing a model of an 'old fashioned' office, which gradually transforms itself into a modern office; and an accompanying commentary compares the technology of the typewriter and telephone, with that of the teletext and computer.

The secondary area of the exhibition gallery is conspicuously hands-on,[399] as the visitor moves from theory into practice. The hands-on exhibits are understood in the light of the principles, history and social context through which the visitor has passed in the earlier displays; in this they are a functional *continuation* of the subject rather than an optional 'plaything'; they act as a literal working example that the most effective way of understanding any transitory and practical thing - such as electricity and magnetism, as here - is by reconstructing and demonstrating it.[400] Replacing the historic museum artefact, this area is one of buttons and

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[397]Any mechanism placed within a box, or covering, gives little sense of its contents or purpose, other than how it looks from the outside.

[398]Label, the Science Museum, 1993.

[399]These interactive exhibits naturally focus upon 'science' rather than history and are central to any understanding of the museum's aims in interpreting objects. When the Science Museum's new extension is completed, a quarter of the whole museum's floor space will be hands-on exhibits. Patricia Fara 'Understanding Science Museums', *The Museum's Journal* (December 1994),p.25.

[400]In many ways the idea of hands-on is the antithesis of the 'traditional' museum, where visitors are warned 'Do not touch'. Concept museums, however, require practical self-discovery. This is personified in the Science Museum's 'Launch Pad', a

headsets, sounds and activity. For example, in looking at the telephone, a voice-over explains the workings of 'The Baltry Switchboard' on display, while the visitor can dial a telephone to see the drive-selector (set to work at a vastly reduced speed), pick-out the digits required; (an idea that would lend itself well to demonstrate the workings of any large keyboard musical instrument.)[401] The 1954 prototype of the 'Speaking Clock' may also be dialled and listened to.

The phenomenal popularity of the Science Museum - in spite of the 'problematic' nature of presenting conceptual ideas within a context necessitating material objects - must be credited to its comprehensiveness of approach. The museum demonstrates a willingness to follow through any individual story, from discovery, to invention, to application, rather than - as music so often does - looking at only one, normally historical aspect. The prevalence of working models and interactive hands-on exhibits further reflects the true purpose of these scientific innovations; and ,vitally, this is again usually from the viewpoint of how ordinary people think of and experience such ideas and their technical manifestations. Unlike many musical collections, the display is not designed for the specialist or boffin; it is erudite, but does not make this an excuse to be elitist: a copy of *The Wireless World* periodical[402] is as important in its own way, as any prototype radio equipment within the telecommunications story. The Science Museum's relevance to the museum visitor now, is further shown in its enthusiasm for contemporary artefacts: the 'Telecommunications Gallery' includes radio pagers and the latest digital systems, alongside its predictions for future developments in these fields. The rapidity and dynamism with which such

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completely hands-on gallery covering diverse areas explored throughout the museum; and aimed particularly at young people.

[401]Curiously, many of the earlier telecommunication inventions resemble stringed and cased musical instruments, for example, 'Hugh's Printing Telegraph' of 1855, which has its letters and numbers printed on a piano-style keyboard.

[402]A popular radio magazine for amateur enthusiasts during the 1920-30s.

new innovations appear within the museum collection is striking, especially when compared with the perceptively 'frozen' collections of musical instruments.

Any history of 'Telecommunications' is about the communication of thoughts and ideas, beliefs and feelings, as much as the objects themselves. In the Science Museum this is represented not only through social-historical contextualisation, but through the interactive exhibits which help to engender a relationship between visitor and concept as it is articulated. The all too common negligence of many music collections to provide their visitors with some degree of hands-on material,[403] makes the production of sound and the playing of an instrument far harder to explain through the existing textual display alone: clearly, musical instrument collections must strive to introduce this. In this, any practical hands-on activities (moreso than with interactive computer exhibits), will allow visitors to create more of their own input; and having created or discovered something *for themselves* about the look, feeling and sound of playing a musical instrument, an impression is made upon them *through experience*, so that the wider collection may be looked upon in an enlightened way.

The Popular Face of Science

> Again and again I have found that it is the interplay between technology and the ordinary person which interests and delights the general public: the human side of 'Who, Why, Where and When?' as much as the technical side of 'What and How?' It is the story behind the object, as much as the object itself which appeals most to people.[404]

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[403]With a few notable exceptions, such as the Horniman Museum's 'Music Gallery', discussed in Chapter 2.

[404]Chris Gill, 'Thoughts on Disposal and Acquisition', *Transmitting: Museum of Communication (Bo'ness) Members' Newsletter*, No.6, (February 1994), p.14.

The popularity of science museums (for the purposes of this brief study, those dealing with 'Telecommunications'), in the face of being essentially conceptual, yet being founded upon often extensive material collections, should be curious. 'Music' *per se*, is, in the outside world, a subject followed with far greater fervour; it should easily be more accessible and popular than the scientific concerns which are, for the most part, incidental to everyday life and not *chosen* by people as music is. Within museums, however, science thrives, not so much because it *exists* (while music is *created*) but because it is interpreted in an exciting and dynamic way. While music is frequently perceived as being 'already interesting' as a subject (therefore requiring little effort by the museum to 'sell' the subject), scientific subjects appear to encourage greater forethought and imagination in order to make them accessible; more still, if the subject is particularly complex or tedious.

In examining a further group of museums devoted to 'telecommunications,'[405] a number of common factors are discernible, both in ideology behind such museums and in their methods of interpretation. Paramount in this is the museums' insistence on the value of demonstration or hands-on exhibits to explain principles and workings in the field of communication, in sound and vision. This was sometimes achieved, as in the Scottish Telecommunications Museum, [406]by comparing an artefact with its modern descendant - another simple ploy for musical instrument collections to copy - or by deliberately playing upon the memories and reminiscences sparked by the predominantly recent antiquity of much of the technical material, to encourage a rapport between visitor and object. These museums appear to be aware of how ordinary people experience such technology; and these experiences are built-upon to make the display 'popular'.

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[405]Supplementary museums contacted by questionnaire. Interestingly, all of these museums (with the one exception of the collection at Prittlewell Priory, Southend Museums Service), are Independent and claim to attract the general public and the specialist visitor groups in equal numbers.

[406]The Scottish Telecommunications Museum, Edinburgh.

It is also usual in these examples for a technician or guide to be on hand to assist with an understanding of the basic principles, by describing or demonstrating the exhibits.[407] The provision of a guide can encourage both the enthusiastic - and reticent - visitor to try simple experiments; the following, for example, would also benefit a music collection:

> To demonstrate sound waves I would ask the visitor to hold the palm of their hand near their mouth and speak. The visitor would feel sound waves. The use of a microscope connected to an oscilloscope could also be used.[408]

Demonstration and interactive exhibits are consistent features throughout all of these collections: the comparatively small-scale Amberley Museum collection,[409] for example, explains the workings of telephone systems, Morse keys and Amateur Radio Broadcasting through demonstration and working exhibits; and the extensive British Telecom Museum, Oxford's exhibition 'Ringing the Changes' has featured hands-on exhibits since its foundation in 1962, to promise a 'true experience'[410] of the artefacts. Contrary to the case of most music museums, it is assumed that the visitor to a telecommunications museum will expect and want to participate - *has* to participate to understand the concepts involved - in the practical nature of the exhibits. Exhibitions are intended, as at the Museum of Communication, Bo'ness, to '...provide sufficient interest to those

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[407]Guide-demonstrators are found in the following museums of Broadcasting and Communication: the British Telecom Museum, Oxford; the Museum of Communication, Bo'ness; Prittlewell Priory Museum, Southend; the Scottish Telecommunications Museum, Edinburgh; Steam Radio, Anstruther, Fife; the Vintage Wireless Museum, London.

[408]Questionnaire received from George Broom, Curator, the Scottish Telecommunications Museum, Edinburgh, 3.2.94.

[409]Museums devoted to telecommunication artefacts tend to have very extensive collections of material. By comparison, Amberley Museum, Arundel, West Sussex has a relatively 'small' collection of about five hundred items.

[410]Questionnaire received from The Curator, British Telecom Museum, Oxford, 4.2.94.

with an interest such that they will interact with the museum.'[411] Here, the *processes* of communication are always demonstrated, as in, for example, 'Inside the Goggle Box', a reconstruction of a working television studio where visitors are asked to participate in 'programme making' by operating cameras, working the central control panel and 'appearing' on the television itself.

It is curious that while such potentially 'difficult' museological subject matter as 'Communications' seek to integrate concepts with artefacts and design with purpose, 'music' collections remain resolutely separatist; musical 'concepts' and musical 'objects' inhabiting totally different museological worlds. These concepts and principles (the physics and acoustics of sound, the playing of musical instruments), manifest themselves only in special concept-based museums[412] such as the Livesey Museum [413]and the Exploratory, [414] designed specifically to articulate these concerns. The display and interpretation of both these museums is exemplary and fills a musical void in the overall comprehensiveness of musical material in museums in the United Kingdom; however, it cannot compensate for the general lack of conceptual awareness in the remaining historic and object-based music museums. A degree of consciousness about musical concepts *must*

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[411]letter from Chris Gill, Curator, the Museum of Communication, Bo'ness, 8.2.94. This museum further carries out its interactive bias through a strong educational and outreach programme with local schools, using exhibits which are always concept or activity inspired - for example 'Energy'. 'Where possible we will include as many hands-on exhibits as possible.'

[412]Here, the term 'museum' is loosely applied for the Livesey Museum has no permanent collection, but acts as a venue for temporary exhibits; and the Exploratory uses only hands-on and 'experimental' exhibits, without having any historic or designated collection.

[413]The Livesey Museum - See Chapter 4.

[414]The Exploratory, Bristol, is an Independent 'practical museum' exploring thematically 'The fun of Science' through its fundamentals ('Light', 'Colour', 'Chemistry' etc) using completely hands-on material. Aimed specifically at children (although sixty per cent of its visitors are mixed family groups), each exhibit takes the form of a simple experiment designed to prompt questions of 'What?' and 'Why?' based on the premise that scientific ideas are best understood by actually trying them for yourself. One section - 'The Stradivarium' - is devoted to 'Hearing and Sound'; it explains what sound is, its properties, how we hear it, and how different musical instruments work. (Based on information supplied by C.Kell, Exhibitions Manager, the Exploratory, 24.2.94.)

be introduced into museums dealing with instruments: an appreciation of musical sound should not be an optional requirement; it is integral to the understanding of any musical instrument and all musical sound.

The telecommunications museums discussed above, succeed in imparting an awareness of their subject's conceptual aspects by placing the onus on the visitor to discover through participation; and demonstrably, the important hands-on aspect of these collections has great appeal for a museum audience more often accustomed to 'hands-*off*' exhibits. The museums discussed here demonstrate that it is fruitless to attempt to explain concepts without participation of some form - whether through guide-demonstrators, models, computers, or any other interactive material. This is, of course, a much easier option for a museum of 'telecommunications', whose artefacts tend to be from the 'recent past', or who use contemporary rather than historic pieces, unfettered - in theory - by conservation restraints to the same degree as musical instruments. Visitors to a musical instrument collection will be unlikely to '...touch, hold and even operate historic exhibits'[415] as they may at the Museum of Communication, Bo'ness; but the possibilities for using models, reconstructions and even everyday non-musical objects (resonant empty containers, pitchable elastic bands),[416] to teach basic musical principles, is eminently feasible. The argument that an increase in hands-on and purpose-built displays is replacing museum objects, is negated when dealing with ideas and concepts, for this is often the *only* truly productive way to bring the objects to life: music cannot be taught through objects alone.

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[415]Leaflet, *The Museum of Communication, Bo'ness: Heritage in Your Hands*, (1992).
[416]As utilised in the Horniman Museum's 'Music Gallery'. Once established, such 'exhibits' need only a fraction of the time, finances and manpower required for live displays or demonstrations.

Re-interpreting the Museum Object

A secondary genre of concept museum may be classified when a museum is concerned with suggesting or re-creating an *experience* or a *state-of-being*, rather than presenting its collection in an objective manner. Although museum *objects* are usually still the mainstay of any such museum, it is their re-interpretation within an overall less object-centred framework that is of interest. Museum objects are still important, but their importance is of being used as a *medium* through which to experience and draw out what the object as an object on its own cannot. In these museums of 'experience', objects are a doorway to something else.

Within this genre, concept museums take many forms, and may enter into the spirit of being an 'experience' museum at varying levels - from a single gallery within a 'traditional' museum, to the total subjectivity of the 'theme park' style of interpretation. Concept museums may trace their origins back to the changing face of museology over the last hundred years as, gradually, collections of 'things' began to be interpreted within a context rather than in isolation. From this grew an increasingly thematic approach towards similar material (even within a single genre such as 'music'), which, as museums began to examine an object's meaning and purpose as well as the object *as* object, opened up a vista of non-physical and conceptual analytic possibilities. In this way, traditional collections of objects began to travel beyond superficial appearance to discover a truer purpose: collections of 'Scientific Apparatus', for example, became metamorphosed into collections interpreting 'Scientific Concepts' such as 'Electricity' and 'Radiation'.

Aside from this natural museological growth, however, it is also important to realise that much of the conceptual approach towards museum objects has been instigated by the museum-visiting public itself; a public for whom *totally object-*

focused displays usually have little relevance or interest.[417] Concept museums account for many of the most popular museums, because they have succeeded in 'humanising' the objects and *involving* their visitors on a personal level. The question of balancing this newfound 'entertainment' with educational aims is, of course, not simple. The best recourse is perhaps to look objectively at what will make the *best* of any collection of material, for the *greatest* number of visitors.

Concept museums (or the use of conceptual methods within a larger concern), work most efficiently when it is necessary to transcend the scope of being a museum *object* in order to increase that object's worth and significance - an apparent paradox. Creative, interactive and emotional subjects lend themselves most readily to this approach; however, at present -although music fits all of these criteria - it remains resolutely and overwhelmingly object-based as a subject, in the face of all its possibilities. The 'state' of being a composer, performer or listener, the *experience* of creating, playing and being actively involved in the music listened to, is largely ignored in music museums - with the rare and understandable exception of musician's 'Birthplace Museums', whose focus is an individual and not an object. Indeed the comparison between 'Birthplace Museums' and collections of object-based collections is striking, the former being far more popular with visitors than their instrumental counterparts because it is easier to approach the music through a biographical route than a purely musical one. (The great success of both the previously discussed Mozart exhibitions, illustrates this point.)[418] An awareness of the musical experiences of ordinary people - not necessarily *musicians* - is therefore fundamental to presenting musical material that the visitor is able to relate to in some way. There is a pressing need to humanise music museums and to acknowledge the impact and experiences of

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[417]Concept museums consistently target a 'general audience 'rather than a 'specialist' one. (Based on information received from questionnaires, 1994.)

[418]The British Library exhibition 'Mozart: Prodigy of Nature' and the Royal County Museum of Cornwall exhibition 'The Age of Mozart' discussed in Chapter 2.

those on the periphery of the subject - the listeners of both the past and the present. In this, classical music collections are particularly elitist, with many instrumental collections mentioning composers only when absolutely necessary and ignoring all other personal insights. Interestingly, the reverse is true of popular music collections: where classical collections focus upon instruments and their classification, popular music concentrates upon individual protagonists, exemplified in creations such as Rock Circus; and moods - the *experience* of the 'Swinging Sixties' is integral - even synonymous - to any appreciation of the Beatles Story.

If, then, music museums still have to be object-based in context, they must learn to be more conceptual in interpretation, if the visitor is to relate *in a proper musical sense* to the instruments and scores on display. This is not to suggest that all music museums become totally conceptual in approach, but rather that the *best* of conceptual ideology and method should be applied, both to enhance general musical understanding, and to relieve the stranglehold of the anaemic museum object where it exists.

To this end, museum case-studies from contrasting ends of the conceptual scale have been chosen to show how such museums are able to present the *essence* of a subject as well as its artefacts. The first example,the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, is representative of a traditional object-based museum which has re-interpreted its collection in terms of a concept - in this case the *idea* of childhood as a state-of-being - rather than remain as a collection of artefacts 'associated with children'.[419] This may be compared with the final case-study discussed, the Guinness World of Records, which is wholly concerned with the experience of

[419]A museum of 'childhood' was chosen because the category is usually a well-established and 'traditional' one. The fact that many of them are now choosing to re-interpret their material in a conceptual way may be more telling than an examination of some other 'newer' museum category, which has adopted a conceptual approach from the outset.

creating or 'being' a world famous achievement or 'extreme'. Though not technically a 'museum', it shares many museological features in that it collects, documents and presents material for the public. The most obviously populist of the concept museums examined here, it is a necessary inclusion to show how a museological-style enterprise can present *facts* rather than objects and still succeed in being educational without the resource of an historical collection.

The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

Initially existing as the 'National Collection of Children's Toys' within its parent museum the Victoria and Albert Museum, the extensive collection of the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood (founded 1872), is inspired by the premise that what happens to individuals as children influences them for the rest of their lives. The adoption of a conceptual approach, in order to evoke something of the *experience* of childhood, is therefore a perceptive move, for all visitors were once children and will bring to the museum many of their own memories and enthusiasms. The museum building itself is sympathetic to the aims of the collection in being open-plan and airy, with galleries of a thematic (though somewhat random) order, through which any route may be taken. The intention appears to be to avoid the 'look' and atmosphere of a 'typical' museum, sometimes intimidating to the children the museum wants to encourage and to the spirit of a collection based upon toys and games.

Following a brief textual 'Welcome' to the museum[420] featuring information about the practical activities and workshops available on that day,[421] - the

[420]Here, an introductory panel is found defining the idea of a 'museum' for younger - and older - visitors, in the form of a number of questions and answers: 'What happens behind the scenes?' ,'Are there things for children to do?' and 'How do I know what the exhibits are?' A 'Sound alive' guide giving a general tour of the key exhibits is also available, (1993).

[421]The museum offers regular Saturday morning 'Art Workshops' and 'Discovery Sheets' graded by age and difficulty. In addition, it always tries to include some

childhood of *today* introduced into the *historic* - most of the museum's visitors begin by exploring the thematic collections grouped on the first floor. These collections are grouped by *type* of object and follow a rough chronology within each section, so that direct comparisons and a sense of development is easily apparent. Throughout these galleries it is also clear that any museum of 'childhood' must be able to work simultaneously on two levels, to sustain the interest of both its young visitors *and* their elders. A child's attention will be most immediately caught by the artefacts themselves (especially those of a familiar type), but the accompanying text must be detailed enough to benefit adults or older children as well:[422] Is, for example, an automaton doll dressed as a 'character' more important than the mechanism working it? In answering this, the museum has to be true to two different conceptions of 'childhood' and its 'story' as represented by the artefacts: childhood as perceived by adults who have passed through it; and children who most probably cannot associate themselves with living a 'concept' called childhood, or who can apply the term only to other children *from the past* when the idea is made deliberately historic. It is for this reason that the museum's realisation of 'childhood' takes two different but equal forms: the *experience* - the concept - of childhood embodies both objective and subjective emotions, the former more likely to recall - through time - the society and history shaping a childhood, while the latter is emotive and more likely to be triggered visually through objects and the idea of 'play'. In this respect, all the displays at Bethnal Green are deliberately both implicitly and explicitly conceptual; the choice of which being determined not so much by the museum object, but by the *visitors* themselves.

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hands-on activities within the regular displays: For example, the temporary exhibition on 'Dynamic Toys' (1993), is designed to allow children to explore toys which move through stored energy.

[422]The Bethnal Green Museum text takes the form of a large simply-worded generic label (such that a child could read), and smaller, very detailed labels describing the individual objects. Curiously though, even the majority of these are placed at a 'child friendly' level of about two feet from the ground.

> The wonderful experiences of 'messing-about' and 'fooling around' cannot be put in a museum; but play things can.[423]

The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood relies upon and manipulates the experiences its visitors (of all ages) bring with them to the museum, to help create a feeling of 'childhood', rather than - as music collections do - largely ignoring the importance of emotional links and the idea of 'life' beyond the artefacts as objects. In this manner, for example, the section devoted to 'Dolls' balances the technical information about manufacturers and materials against the social history of the dolls as items of play. This is not told abstractly, but related through the history of specific examples: a 'Charity School Doll' (dressed in the clothes of that charity) acts as a catalyst to describe what it was like to be a child at one of those schools in the mid eighteenth century (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic for boys, Reading, Knitting and Sewing for girls). The museum also suggests the experience of childhood by presenting material within a sympathetic and appropriate setting: a 'Dolls' Hospital' display is set out in the style of a doll shop of the nineteenth century, providing '...the opportunity to display some exhibits in an evocative way rather than in showcases'[424] and helping to create a notion of a wealthy Victorian childhood.

It is soon apparent that the different sections of toys in the museum are associated with specific conceptual themes: for example, whereas 'Dolls' have, until more recent times, traditionally always symbolised 'innocent play', 'Games' have been used as a medium for 'social conditioning'. The title, generic source, method of play and all subsequent variations of play in a particular board game (or equivalent), is shown to be a teaching vehicle through which adults impart lessons

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[423]*The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Guidebook*, p.5.
[424]'Dolls' Hospital' Label, Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, (1993).

or principles to the young.[425] Under the heading 'Virtue Rewarded', and using the board-game *Pilgrim's Progress* as an illustration, it is explained:

> One of the most important subjects taught to children during 1790-1840 concerned behaviour and morals. By stressing that happiness has only to be gained by being virtuous and resisting the many temptations placed before a child during its life.[426]

The text concludes with comments about the changing emphasis and assumptions made on the subject of 'growing up'; again, demonstrating successfully a conceptual approach towards a material collection.

The upper gallery of the museum is devoted explicitly to the concept of childhood, featuring few of the toys and games of play, but rather, the clothes, books and associated artefacts required by the 'state' of being a child. It is an adult or observer's perspective on the subject. The gallery contained a temporary exhibition 'The Early Years Display',[427] within which sections discussing issues such as 'Health', 'Feeding', and 'Mortality' were related through the medium of their associated objects. Statistical detail (for example, 'Up to seventy percent of infants born in eighteenth-century London died before the age of two.'), is balanced by issues of social debate ('Role Play' for male and female children) in the clothes and toys displayed, often using contemporary comments and observations to create a link between the past and present.

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[425]Many games for the very young are reliant upon a knowledge of numbers or letters; later on, games concentrate upon improving recognition, memory, strategy and general knowledge. The museum describes the games in those terms.
[426]Label, Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, (1993).
[427]On exhibition 1993-5.

'More than just toys' - the experience of being a child is explored at *The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood.*

(Reproduced courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the V&A.)

Currently, the gallery is in a transitional stage. It is intended that a second interim exhibition will subsequently form the basis of a new display entirely devoted to the social history of childhood.[428] Called 'Growing Up',[429] its story will charter:

> The lives of children across the centuries: through Georgian and Victorian childrens' costume, furniture, paintings, prints and 'photos, the Growing Up display traces the stage in childhood when children become less dependent upon adults and take their own steps within the home and beyond.[430]

It is often the case that the most obvious and immediate representatives of a subject - *toys* for childhood, *instruments* for music - may not tell as much about the subject as do the peripheral and secondary source of objects associated with it. This case is often proved if the subject is at all social rather than purely historical, or the approach favoured is a conceptual one. The practical and contextual understanding of an object engendered by this approach also increases the esteem of the object: a concept does not work *without* the associated material objects through which it manifests itself. This close and symbiotic relationship combines to provide an emotional and cerebral understanding of 'childhood'; and perhaps if this method succeeds '...to help museum visitors to sense what it was like to be a child or a parent in the past,'[431] might it not be used to suggest the lives and

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[428]The emphasis attached to 'social history' rather than 'similar object' displays of material appears to be a constant thread running through museums of childhood: The Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh, has exhibition areas devoted to 'Health and Hygiene', 'Schooldays' and 'Children at Work' to 'explore the concept of childhood.' (Questionnaire received from The Curator, 3.3.94); Dewsbury Museum, West Yorkshire, intends to re-interpret its existing childhood collection - 'The new gallery plans will put objects in a context of the lives of the people who used them and combine more interactive elements which relate the displays to visitors' own experience.' (Questionnaire received from The Curator, 26.2.94); and Sudbury Hall Museum of Childhood, Derby, plans new displays on 'Literature' , 'Children's Theatre' and 'Health'. (Questionnaire received from The Curator, 21.2.94).

[429]The 'Growing Up Social History Project' is anticipated to open in 1996.

[430]'Preview' label, Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, (1993).

[431]*Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood Guidebook*, (1986), p.36.

musical creation of musicians past and present; an insight beyond the purely material musical object?

The Guinness World of Records

> ...the unique exhibition that brings to life thousands of the amazing records, fascinating facts and astonishing feats from the best selling Guinness Book of Records....Compare yourself to the breathtaking replicas of the extremes of the human World. Watch exclusive videos of record-setters in action. Tap into our computer data-banks for the very latest record breaking information....As you walk through the Exhibition, the common everyday world vanishes. You are now in a world of extremes: of the strongest, the largest, the shortest, the tallest, the brightest and the greatest.[432]

Beyond the hyperbole of the Guinness World of Records[433] populist-conscious marketing is a highly successful enterprise, informing and entertaining the general public in equal measures. It is unusual in using *concepts* ('the *brightest*, the *greatest*') as a basis for display; and even its more tangible subjects (representations of 'extremes' natural and striven for), transcend the limits of a simple representation 'by object' because of their predominately practical nature. In this, the non-visual and transitory aspects of the 'records' mirrors that of music; the notion of 'achievement', 'creation' and 'performance' underlying any of the 'human records' recall the same qualities in music. However, in this case, the 'records' (a concept in itself), have taken the place of objects as the constitution of a collection: The Guinness World of Records succeeds in demonstrating how themes may still be developed in the absence of a material collection, and are

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[432]'Introduction', *The Guinness World of Records Guidebook*, (1993), p.1.
[433]The Guinness World of Records, the Trocadero Centre, London, is one of at least eight other Guinness World of Records exhibitions around the world.

ultimately of more interest to an audience seeking facts and fascination, not objects and objectivity, as they 'Experience the Extraordinary'.[434]

The exhibition format divides the various record-breaking areas into distinct sections: 'The Human World', 'The Animal World', 'Planet Earth' and 'Sport and Entertainment'. The tour opens with the section on 'The Human World', utilising the natural affinity (and revulsion) visitors will experience towards the subject to create immediate interest and 'atmosphere' through the relationship of 'interacting' with other individuals, their peculiarities or obsessions. This section is particularly effective because the exhibits (models to scale) are usually placed in a 'thumb-nail sketch' context, where careful attention has been paid to dress and period detail and the 'facts' of the record are sometimes illustrated by a hands-on feature. For example, the model of the 'World's Tallest Man'[435] is shown in a 1930s-styled room, in which the 'wireless' on the sideboard has been converted to a video screen to show archive film footage of that gentleman. There are framed photographs of him on the mantelpiece and a chair made to his scale placed beside it. Adjacent to this, a text panel provides the dates and data of his height at various ages compared to that of an average person; and brass plate outlines of his hands and feet allow visitors to contrast this with their own. Finally, the ultimate visual contrast is provided by placing the 'World's Smallest Woman'[436] next to this display.

Although throughout this section the basic combination of human model with accompanying factual information would have adequately illustrated any particular 'record', the display sought to add a further *practical* dimension by interpolating into this a number of interactive exhibits. These exhibits serve to reinforce both

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[434]Sub-title to the Guinness World of Records.
[435]Robert Pershing Wadlow (1918-40), Illinois, USA, measured eight feet eleven inches.
[436]Pauline Musters (1876-95), Ossendrecht, Holland, measured twenty-four inches.

the physical notion of the 'extremes' of the human cases under analysis and the visitors' sense of amazement at them. Beside the replica model of the 'Heaviest Man',[437] for example, is a large 'weighing-scale' area on the floor, on which visitors are invited to stand to see how many of them are required to match his weight. The constantly changing and spontaneous nature of many of these 'records' is also impressed upon visitors by exhibits such as 'The Recent Population of the World', as represented by a constantly ascending set of digits (the birth-rate quite literally moving before their eyes); and this is contrasted - and made more poignant - by its proximity to an account of the 'World's Oldest Man',[438] whose hundred and twenty-year life is depicted through an historical chronology, encompassing the assassination of Lincoln in 1865 and the innovations of 1984. Above all, these displays serve to illustrate and articulate what would be dull in text: a written account of the 'World's Tallest Man' does not have the impact of *experiencing* the replica; just as musical works will eventually always require recourse to their *sound* in order to make them tangible.

Throughout the exhibition, the use of film and video footage is extensive and laudable, having the great asset of being able to capture and replay endlessly many record-breaking feats. The 'World's Shallowest Dive from the Greatest Height' and The 'World's Longest Domino Tumble', for example, could not be represented in any other manner as 'exhibits': the ability to see such feats undertaken, to *experience* something of 'the record', is key to the appreciation and enjoyment of any such acts. Even if, in theory, a replica of the 'Diving Pool' or dominoes from the 'Tumble' were featured as exhibits, they would still fail to embody or suggest the record-breaking feat as truthfully and involvingly as it can be represented through film. As with music, the idea of 'performance' cannot be summarised through objects alone.

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[437]Robert Earl Hughs, Missouri, USA, weighed an estimated one-thousand four-hundred pounds.
[438]Scigechiugo Izumi, Asan, Japan.

Matching the weight of the 'World's Heaviest Man' at the *Guinness World of Records*.

(Reproduced courtesy of the *Guinness World of Records*.)

As the exhibition moves into the realm of activity-based records, computer databases are introduced in profusion, and the deployment of audio-visual exhibits also becomes noticeably increased. For the section on 'Sport', it is also the first time that 'historical' artefacts are introduced into the display. For example, the 'Screen of Fame' area cross-references video film and commentary with models and cases of memorabilia, to produce a practical and visual precis of a particular sportsman or woman, highlighted - but not *dictated* by - the cased objects. Indeed, the idea of the *object* within an activity-driven setting is deliberately played upon in one label accompanying a case of sporting trophies, which reads:

> By the time you finished reading this, the Brabham team in 1983 had refuelled and replaced four tyres on their racing car.[439]

The later section depicting 'Musical Records' follows a similar route to the sporting one, in being primarily visually focused (a giant musical 'stave' running the length of the gallery wall) but in reality using these visual reference points to help colour the idea of the musical records (visitors listen to 'notes' on the giant stave to hear the record-breaking pieces of music or performers).[440] Small figure models of musicians, sheet music and photographs add to the generally rather nostalgic ambience of the gallery, and a large jukebox playing further 'hit' recordings illustrates a text about each as it is played. In spite of the slick gadgetry and somewhat cliched graphics of this gallery, it works well as a display because it is driven ultimately by the music itself. Indeed, the element of showmanship which runs throughout all of the Guinness World displays is particularly suited to the most 'popular' of music; and encouragingly, even within this man-made

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[439]Label, Guinness World of Records, (1993).
[440]For example, visitors may listen to the 'Best Selling Single' - Bing Crosby singing *White Christmas*, or the 'Highest Paid Classical Performer' - Ignacy Jan Paderewski.

bracket, the respective records of 'classical' and 'popular' music are treated with equal regard.

In conclusion, the Guinness World of Records is successful in its interpretative mix of facts and statistics, achievements and endeavours, because where it cannot replicate the tangible evidence of a record, it attempts to embody its *spirit* through other means. Though naturally occurring records are awe-inspiring, it is the *extremes* of the human world, both in their physical person and in their goals achieved, which attracts and fascinates people.[441] It is intended that visitors should depart the exhibition with a sense of the perseverance, zeal and occasional lunacy of the human protagonists involved. The various record-breaking feats are significant only if the visitor can relate to them as an *experience* undertaken by somebody else. Similarly, with music collections (regardless of the category or type of material), at some point a *connection* has to be made between the visitor and the musical subject *as it is composed, performed or listened to*. The concepts of creation, performance and participation are what makes the music what it is; just as, in turn, musical instruments and scores are the means by which it is made tangible. Though music museums rely upon material evidence, a true understanding of that material can only be achieved by a re-appraisal of the object.

[441]Though adroitly displayed, the Guinness World of Records' sections on 'The Animal World' and 'Planet Earth' lack the *frisson* of human involvement - in some extreme form - found in the other sections.

CONCLUSION

The presentation of musical material is as limitless and fascinating as it is exacting and frustrating. Though 'music' as a subject may seem to be self-explanatory in everyday terms, it is clear that it is not possible to define any single interpretation of it within a museological context. The surprising diversity and quality of musical holdings in museums in the United Kingdom is therefore simultaneously a blessing and a curse, for the subject is capable of being viewed from so many different perspectives that the museums it has engendered have, of necessity, only been able to *contain* the subject by directing it into a series of easily identifiable - but object-centred - categories. The categories into which musical collections find themselves placed are dictated by the specific nature of their material, within the established overall objective of each museum: in this manner the collection becomes subjugated to some extent - as do all collections - to the particular emphasis of individual museums, resulting in, for example, musical collections explored only in terms of academic research, social history, or applied art genres. Although the use of such categories provides a collection with a definition and a museum with a criterion, it is sometimes an ambiguous asset; for it is inferred that these categories often unintentionally limit the potential of their musical holdings by splintering music into easily-absorbed but ultimately rather two-dimensional fragments of a far richer subject. Most of the museums examined here have succeeded in being comprehensive *within the criteria* of their specific categories, but this has often been at the expense of a truly musical understanding of the subject. In this respect, musical categories are a useful *guide* to the subject, but they should not be considered finite explorations.

The decision to approach the case-study museums from the perspective of the visitor instead of the curator has perhaps resulted in a rather personal analysis of

the subject, but *visitors* are not objective in their response to a display; and it is the visitors' conception of things musical, not the curators', that needs to be understood first in order to improve the use of museum collections. When the impact and importance music has in many people's lives is considered, its position in museums appears curiously lacking in profile in comparison with that of many other seemingly less immediately accessible subjects such as sport and theatre collections. The reason for this is not so much due to any case of apathy on the part of the curators or museums involved, but because of a general state of *resignation* regarding how musical material should be displayed, based upon its traditional object-centred historical precedents. The examination of case-studies in this thesis has shown that the crux of the problem lies in the disparity between museological definition and the nature of music itself. Traditionally, 'music' has been presented through collections of *objects* because - in a museological context - this was thought to be the only way in which it could be displayed. However, to embody an understanding of music only in terms of its physical material is highly restrictive; it negates not only the subject's aesthetic creative worth but its *popularity* as it is experienced and understood by the greater part of the populace. The question arising out of this is therefore one of how to address the non-visual and transitory aspects of music which imbue it with its true musical sense, within a still object-centred framework.

In answer to this, it has been seen that a number of conclusions may be drawn from an analysis of the secondary series of case-study museums (chapters 6-9), each of which shares music's 'problematic' nature to some degree. The feasibility of attempting to 'travel beyond' the museum object is, for example, far easier for museums dealing with moving image subjects - film's essential visual element is what makes this transient, creative entity work well in a museum context - compared with that of music's physical invisibility. Theatre and performing art collections similarly are better at imparting a *sense* of their art because of their

usually visible nature; although the prominence of practical and participatory work which is so much a part of their museum life is also found increasingly in many of the larger music collections in concerts, workshops and hands-on areas within displays. Sport museums demonstrate a keen awareness of both how to market and present what is 'popular', in striking contrast to music collections, (with the obviously populist exception of the Rock Circus type.) However, the analogy between persuading sport fans and music listeners to visit museums interpreting these respective interests is really the same. Sport museums have found *interpretation* to be the key to their success: active, popular subjects require active and non-elitist museum displays that can go beyond the scope the object in the glass case. In this respect 'concept' museums represent an encouraging new perspective on the museum object: it is realised that objects will always be at the heart of any exploration, but that the museum curators must suit the breadth of interpretation to the scope of the material involved. It is in this case that musical subjects have tremendous potential for adopting a more conceptual approach, enabling museum curators to explore the creative and subjective qualities of the subject as well as its technical and historical facts. Indeed the relative success of these museums in presenting active, emotive and imaginative accounts of their subject's non-visual and practical elements, clearly offers many comparable scenarios for music collections to emulate.

This work has revealed that music museums' exhibitions are very individual concerns; some having remained practically unchanged for the past thirty years or so, while others evolve gradually year by year. It has been a surprise to discover just how passionately individual institutions adhere to strongly-defined (usually historic) aims and objectives for their collections; and also at times frustrating to see that this has sometimes resulted in narrow-minded collecting policies and elitist interpretations of the material. It would appear that the worrying divide between Western Art Music and popular music collections is not so much one of 'culture'

as one of 'attitude'. Nevertheless, 'popular' subjects - the Mozart exhibitions, the traditional music of Balnain House - *are* capable of adopting a scholarly approach; and conversely it should therefore be possible to make classical subjects less intimidating in order to make them accessible and enjoyable to a broader spectrum of people than they are at present. Clearly from the museums studied, it is apparent that the most successful and popular music museums - or their equivalent - are those which are trying to move away from an object-centred approach towards a more creative and empathic exploration of the subject. Nevertheless, it is indicative of musical attitudes that the museums most willing to avoid an object-based approach - or to undertake a re-appraisal of their musical holdings - are those without a Western Art Music collection: the pop music of Rock Circus, folk idiom of Balnain House and ethnomusicological holdings of the Horniman Museum for example, are not resigned to the 'historicising' process of many classical music collections. The ridiculous paradox of an establishment being able to present 'music' more successfully if it is not reliant upon an object-based collection (Balnain House, the National Sound Archive), further illustrates the dichotomy that has been allowed to develop between music as 'artefacts', and music as it is practised and listened to. The interest expressed in classical music in the outside world is not reflected in the interpretation of that area within museum collections; and in a commercial world, the ability to attract visitors is an issue all museums have to face. For the general public, classical musical collections still too often appear to be polarised at the 'specialist 'end of the visitor spectrum; and so it is as important to re-define the 'image' of classical music in museums as it is to examine the objects themselves.

It is understandable that many music collections form only an incidental part of the contents of a museum, and so the onus for change and re-appraisal must rest predominately upon the national and major museum collections. In these museums, musical instruments far outweigh any other type of musical material,

and so the re-definition of 'music' must begin with them if they are to gain any relevance for the greater music-loving public. Music museums have a duty to collect and preserve but this process should not alienate the curators responsible for such material from an awareness of its proper function: as the case-studies demonstrate, access to the sound of instruments - or music performed - and the inclusion of social-historical concerns to help suggest the *experience* of music's creative context, are the two areas crucial to this. Above all it should be reiterated that in this, the re-definition of the subject demanded is vitally one of attitude as much as practice: if museum curators can learn to look at musical artefacts as the manifestation of creative ideas and performance, then their subsequent interpretation will always be a truer one, both for the musical objects themselves and for what most visitors *really* want to discover in music.

APPENDIX A

SYNOPSIS OF MUSEUM CASE STUDIES

Chapters 1-5:

Balnain House, Inverness

(Founded 1993) Governed by Trust. A 'Resource Centre for Highland Music', its facilities include an exhibition gallery, practice rooms, an archive and a library. The exhibition traces the history of the past two-thousand years of Highland Music; it is unusual in being an *aural* collection rather than a material one - there is no historic collection. Some practical exhibits are also included. Covers a broad spectrum of visitors, from local performers to tourists.
(Attendance figures [Exhibition] 1993-4 - 5,000)

The British Library, London

(Formally established 1973) The 'National Repository for Printed Scores', it holds over 1.5 million pieces of music from the sixteenth century to the present day. 'Mozart: Prodigy of Nature' was a temporary exhibition held in the 'British Library Galleries' (30 August 1991 - 12 January 1992), designed to coincide with the Mozart bi-centenary celebrations. The exhibition drew upon manuscripts and scores from the library collections, further augmented by loan material. Educational rather than populist in its interpretation.
(Attendance figures not available.)

The British Museum, London

(Founded 1753) National museum governed by Board of Trustees. Houses the largest collection of musical instruments in the United Kingdom (numbering 'several thousand'), dispersed throughout the Departments of 'Egyptian

Antiquities', 'Greek and Roman Antiquities', 'Mediaeval and Later Antiquities' and 'Western Asiatic Antiquities'. Academic-research oriented.

(Attendance figures 1993 - 6,700,000)

Gloucester Folk Museum

(Founded 1935) Local Authority Museum. Features a collection of about forty musical instruments and associated material belonging to the eighteenth century 'Frampton Volunteers' (currently in store). Also, several items of twentieth-century gramophone and early hi-fi equipment. Specific emphasis upon local and social history.

(Attendance figures 1992-3 - 56,000

The Gustav Holst Birthplace Museum, Cheltenham

(Founded 1975) Trust Fund administered by Local Authority. The composer Gustav Holst was born here in 1874. The ground floor of the house is used as a display area for items connected with his life and work, while the rest of the house features period room settings to illustrate Victorian and Edwardian life. Biographical-historical in tone.

(Attendance figures 1992-3 - 11,000)

The Horniman Museum, London

(Founded 1901) Established as a public music collection. Governed by the 'Horniman Museum Public Museum Trust'. The most comprehensive collection of musical instruments in the United Kingdom, it houses about 6,000 instruments, including the 'Bull Collection' and the 'Carse Collection'. The collection is ethnomusicological; it aims to represent instruments from all parts of the world and their performing traditions. A new interactive 'Music Gallery' was opened in 1993.

(Attendance figures 1992 - 200,000)

The Magnificent Music Machines ('Paul Corin Collection'), Liskeard, Cornwall

(Founded 1967) Private collection of 12 mechanical musical instruments (fairground organs, dance hall organs, Player Pianos) from c.1900-40. All the instruments are demonstrated during a guided tour. Collection succeeds in being both specialist and populist.

(Attendance figures not recorded.)

The National Sound Archive, London

(Founded 1983) Governed by the British Library. The 'National Repository for Sound Recordings', it includes 950,000 discs, 150,000 hours of tape, 10,000 videos and 300 artefacts. Its Departments cover: 'Western Art Music' (cataloguing historic performances, performers and scores), 'International Music', 'Jazz', 'Popular Music' (from Music Hall to the present day), 'Spoken Literature', 'Wildlife Sound', 'Language and Dialect', 'Industro-Mechanical Sound' and 'Oral History'. A number of the Archive's artefacts are displayed in a small-scale exhibition 'Revolutions in Sound' (opened 1989), tracing the history of sound recording and sound reproduction.

(Attendance figures not available.)

The Ranger's House, Blackheath, London

(Founded 1974) Governed by English Heritage. Houses the 'Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments' (responsible to the Horniman Museum) and the 'Suffolk Collection of Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraits'. The 'Dolmetsch Collection' features about 50 items, including original instruments, restored instruments and modern instruments based upon earlier designs collected or made by the musicologist Arnold Dolmetsch (1858-1940). Criteria of design, craftsmanship and practical performance.

(Attendance figures 1990-91 - 17,000)

Rock Circus, London

(Founded 1989) Managed by Madame Tussaud's Independent Company. Stationary and animatronic wax figures illustrate the history of Rock Music from the 1950s to the present day. The story is told through the music itself, using infra-red headsets and audio-visual technology. Commercial and highly popular visitor attraction.

(Attendance figures not available.)

The Royal County Museum of Cornwall, Truro

(Founded 1818) Governed by the Royal Institution of Cornwall. No specific musical collections. A temporary exhibition 'The Age of Mozart' (June - September 1991) drew upon material from its many existing collections ('Ceramics', 'Glass', 'Costume', 'Paintings and Drawings'), to provide a social-historical account of the time in which Mozart lived.

(Attendance figures 1992 - 42,000)

University of Edinburgh Collection of Historic Musical Instruments

(Founded 1855, Re-established 1980) Governed by the *University of Edinburgh.* Extensive, academic and predominately Western Art Music collection of about 2,400 instruments of all types. A number of designated collections includes: 'The Blades Collection', 'C.H.Brackenburg Memorial Collection', 'Galpin Society Collection', 'Glen Collection', 'Langwill Collection', 'Macauley Collection', 'Mickleburgh Collection', 'Reid Collection', 'Rendall Collection' and 'Ross Collection'. Specialist research and teaching oriented.

(Attendance figures not recorded.)

The Victoria and Albert Museum, London

(Founded 1852) Governed by Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The museum houses the 'National Collection of Musical Instruments' within its 'Department of Furniture and Interior Design'. It consists of some 300 Western Art Music instruments, studied primarily as objects of applied art and design rather than as strictly musical material.

(Attendance figures 1993-4 [including other V&A sites] 1,370,000)

Chapters 6-9:

Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood

(Founded 1872) Governed by, and a branch of, the Victoria and Albert Museum. Contains 'The National Collection of Children's Toys' presented in thematic displays of types of toys and games. A separate gallery is devoted to the social history of childhood - 'The Early Years'. Workshops and hands-on exhibits are usually featured. Aims to be educational and entertaining for both children and adults.

(Attendance figures 1993 - 234,435)

The British Golf Museum, St Andrews

(Founded 1990) Governed by the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews Trust. A site museum. Presents a chronological history of golf in the United Kingdom through ball and club collections and memorabilia. Extensive use of computer databases, video and interactive exhibits. Enthusiast and general interest visitors.

(Attendance figures 1993 - 36,000)

The British Photographic Museum, Totnes

(Founded 1987) Privately owned. Chronological and thematic artefact-based account of photography in the United Kingdom c.1875-1960. The extensive collection holds about 20,000 items, of which only one third is displayed. Specialist-enthusiast oriented.

(Attendance figures not available.)

The Guinness World of Records, London

(Founded 1989) A thematic exhibition illustrating the record-breaking extremes and achievements in the fields of 'Human Life', 'Animal Life', 'Planet Earth', 'Structures and Machines' and 'Sport and Entertainment'. Extensive use of interactive and audio-visual exhibits. Educational, populist entertainment.

(Attendance figures not available.)

Lord's Cricket Ground Museum, London

(Founded 1953) Governed by Marylebone Cricket Club. A site museum. The Gestetner Tour of Lord's includes a guided visit to the 'Long Room', the MCC Museum and a tour of the grounds. The museum presents a thematic memorabilia, painting and artefact-centred account of the history of cricket. Enthusiast oriented.

(Attendance figures 1993 - 30,000)

The Museum of the Moving Image

(Founded 1988) Governed by the British Film Institute. A chronological and thematic account of the history of moving images from the discovery of 'persistence of vision' to the present day, concentrating upon film in all its forms. Features actor-guides and many interactive exhibits and practical scenarios. Simultaneously educational and populist.

(Attendance figures 1991-2 - 438,000)

The Science Museum ('Gallery of Telecommunications'), London

(Founded 1857) National museum governed by Board of Trustees. A chronological account of the history of telecommunications from c.1830 to the present day, with emphasis upon practical application. Extensive use of hands-on exhibits. Seeks to combine education with entertainment.

(Attendance figures 1993 [whole museum] 1,277,417)

The Shakespeare Globe Theatre Museum, London

(Founded 1972) Governed by the International Shakespeare Globe Centre. Permanent exhibitions on the history of Elizabethan and Jacobean Theatre, including a working replica of a Jacobean Theatre. Currently in the process of building the Shakespeare's Globe International Education Centre and a replica *Globe Theatre* (anticipated opening 1999). High education profile - workshops, school parties.

(Attendance figures 1993 - 23,000)

The Story of Telecommunications, London

(Founded 1978) Governed by British Telecommunications plc. A social-historical and practical account of inventions and applications in the field of telecommunications from c.1800 to the present day. Many hands-on exhibits. General interest visitors and educational parties predominate.

(Attendance figures 1993 - 29,000)

The Theatre Museum ('The National Museum of the Performing Arts'), London

(Founded 1974) Governed by, and a branch of, the Victoria and Albert Museum. Traces the history of the performing arts in Great Britain from the

sixteenth century to the present day. Includes several temporary and thematic exhibitions: 'Slap: A Celebration of Stage make-up' and '*The Wind in the Willows*: From Page to Stage'. Workshops, play-readings and practical activities are also highlighted. Research and general interest visitors.
(Attendance figures 1992 - 117,000)

'The Waking Dream: Photography's First Century'

A temporary exhibition held at the City Art Centre, Edinburgh, (7 August - 2 October 1993), of 250 original photographs from the Gilman Paper Company Collection. The photographs, dating from 1839-1939, illustrate themes of technical progress, choice of subject matter and artistic creation within a broadly chronological framework.
(Attendance figures not available.)

The Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum

(Founded 1977) Governed by the All England Lawn Tennis Club. A site museum. Chronological account of the history of lawn tennis from c.1880 to the present day, using broad collection of artefacts including costume, trophies and memorabilia. Strong social-historical emphasis (room settings) and extensive use of audio-visual technology. Tennis enthusiast and general interest visitors.
(Attendance figures 1992-3 - 56,700)

APPENDIX B

SUPPLEMENTARY MUSEUMS AND ESTABLISHMENTS CONTACTED BY LETTER, QUESTIONNAIRE OR VISIT

Chapters 1-5:

Music Museums and Collections

Abbey House Museum, Leeds *

Anne of Cleves House Museum, Lewes

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Bagshaw Museum, Batley, West Yorkshire

The Bate Collection of Historical Instruments, Oxford

The BBC Sound Archive, London

The Beatles Story, Liverpool

Bellm Cars and Music of Yesterday, Sarasota, Florida, USA

Birmingham Conservatoire *

Birmingham Museum of Science and Industry

Blaise Castle House Museum, Bristol

The Boosey and Hawks Museum, Edgware *

The Bowes Museum, Durham

Bradford Art Gallery and Museum

Brighton Museum and Art Gallery *

Cambridge University Faculty of Music

Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Carlisle City Museum and Art Gallery

Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museums

Clitheroe Sound Archive

Colchester Museums

The Concertina Museum Collection, Derby *

Craven Museum, Skipton

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery, Merthyr Tydfil

Dean Castle, Kilmarnock

The Edward Elgar Birthplace Museum, Worcester

Fenton House (The Benton Fletcher Collection), Hampstead, London

Finchcocks (Richard Burnett Collection of Historical Keyboard Instruments), Kent

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

The Forsyth Collection, Manchester *

The Galpin Society (For the Study of Musical Instruments)

Grosvenor Museum, Chester

Handel House Association (The Musical Collections Forum), London

Hampshire County Museum Service *

Keith Harding's World of Mechanical Music, Northleach, Gloucestershire *

Hawick Museum, Roxburgh

Ipswich Museums and Galleries

Jersey Museum Service

Keswick Museum and Art Gallery *

Leicestershire Museums

Liverpool Museum (National Museum and Galleries on Merseyside)

The Livesey Museum, London

Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery

Manchester Museum

N.P.Mander Ltd. (Pipe Organ Builders), London

Manx Museum and National Trust, Isle of Man

McManus Galleries, Dundee

The Mechanical Music and Doll Collection, Chichester

The Charles Moore Collection of Wind Instruments, Leicester *

Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum, Northumberland *

Moyse's Hall Museum, Bury St.Edmunds

The Museums and Galleries Commission

The Museum of London

The Museum of Victorian Reed Organs, Shipley, West Yorkshire

The Musical Museum (The British Piano Museum), Brentford

Napton Nickelodeon, Rugby, Warwickshire *

The National Museum of Ireland

The National Museums of Scotland

The National Sound Archive (The British Library)

Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford *

The Royal Armouries, H.M.Tower of London

The Royal College of Music *

The Royal Military School of Music, Twickenham

The Royal Northern College of Music

Russell-Coates Art Gallery and Museum, Bournemouth

The Russell Collection of Early Keyboard Instruments, Edinburgh

Rutland Cottage Music Museum, Spalding, Lincolnshire

Saffron Walden Museum

The Alice Schulmann-Franck Collection of Musical Instruments, Hailsham

The Scottish United Services Museum

Sheffield City Museum

Snowshill Manor, Broadway, Worcestershire

Somerset County Museum

St.Albans Organ Museum

St.Peter Hungate Church Museum, Norwich

Strangers' Hall Museum, Norwich

The Thursford Collection, Fakenham, Norfolk *

Tolston Museum, Huddersfield

Torquay Museum

The Ulster Folk and Transport Museum

Waddesdon Manor, Aylesbury

The Wallace Collection, London

Warrington Museum

Warwick Castle

West Yorkshire Folk Museum, Halifax

York Castle Museum

Chapters 6-9:

Museums/Collections of Photography, Film and Cinema Material

Banbury Museum, Oxon

Beck Isle Museum of Rural Life, Pickering, North Yorkshire

The Cinema Museum, Kennington

Clapperton Photographic Studio, Selkirk

The Empire and Commonwealth Museum, Bristol *

Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre, Kent

The Fox Talbot Museum of Photography, Wiltshire

Holmfirth Postcard Museum, Huddersfield

Jersey Museum

Kingston upon Thames Museum and Heritage Centre, Surrey

The Laurel and Hardy Museum, Ulverston

Leeds Industrial Museum

The Medina Camera Museum, Isle of Wight *

M.G.M. Cinemas, Oxford

Museum of the History of Science, Oxford *

The National Film Archive *

The National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, Bradford

Newbury District Museum, Berkshire *

Old Kiln Agricultural Museum, Farnham, Surrey

The Royal Photographic Society (The National Centre of Photography), Bath

Wick Heritage Centre, Caithness

Woodspring Museum, Avon

The Woolstaplers' Hall, Chipping Camden, Gloucestershire

Museums/Collections of Theatre and Live Performance Material

The Black Country Museum, Dudley

Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth

The Georgian Theatre, Richmond, North Yorkshire

Hamilton District Museum, Lanarkshire *

Llandudno Museum, Gwynedd *

The Mander and Mitcheson Theatre Collection, London

Museum of East Anglican Life, Suffolk

Penny Arcadia, Pocklington, North Yorkshire

The People's Palace, Glasgow

The People's Story, Edinburgh

The Puppet Theatre Museum, Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire

The Royal Shakespeare Company Exhibition, Stratford

William Shakespeare Birthplace Museum, Stratford *

The Ellen Terry Memorial Museum, Smallhythe, Kent

Tewkesbury Museum, Gloucestershire

The Theatre Royal, Bury St.Edmunds

The Thursford Collection, Fakenham, Norfolk *

Wookey Hole Caves and Mill, Somerset *

Museums/Collections of Sport

Chepstow Museum, Gwent

Doncaster Museum *

The James Gilbert Ruby Football Museum, Warwickshire

The Irish Horse Museum, County Kildare

Much Wenlock Museum, Shropshire

The National Horse-racing Museum, Newmarket *

Thirsk Museum, North Yorkshire

York Racing Museum

Concept Museums (Telecommunications and Broadcasting)

Amberley Chalk Pit Museum, Arundel, Sussex

Bourne Hall Museum, Epsom

British Telecom Museum, Oxford

The Milne Museum, Tonbridge, Kent *

Museum of Communication, Bo'ness

The National C.E.M.Wireless Museum, Arreton, Isle of Wight

The Orkney Wireless Museum

Prittlewell Priory Museum, Southend-on-Sea

R.T.E.Broadcasting Museum, Dublin *

The Scottish Telecommunications Museum, Edinburgh

Stacey Hill Museum, Milton Keynes *

The Time-Ball Tower, Deal, Kent *

Steam Radio ('The Joseph Urban Radio Collection'), Anstruther, Fife

Valentia Island Museum, County Kerry

The Vintage Wireless Museum, West Dulwich

York Castle Museum

Concept Museums ('Experience' Museums)

The Stephen G.Beaufort Museum, Wakefield

The British Nostalgia Centre, Bath

The Childhood Heritage Centre, Pitlochry *

William Churchill's Britain at War Theme Museum, London

Coventry Blitz Experience

Dewsbury Museum, West Yorkshire

The Exploratory, Bristol

Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry *

Judges' Lodgings, Lancaster *

Museum of Childhood, Dublin *

Museum of Childhood, Edinburgh

Museum of the Department of Natural Philosophy, Aberdeen University *

The Museum of South Yorkshire Life

St. Mungo Museum of Religion, Glasgow

Sudbury Hall Museum of Childhood, Derbyshire

Sunnyside Museum, Montrose, Angus

The White Cliffs Experience, Dover

(* indicates no reply to letter or questionnaire)

The questionnaire sent to the above supplementary museums was not a standard one; in each case, it was tailored to suit the different categories of museum examined (Music, Film, Theatre, Sport, 'Concept'), and was sometimes altered

again even *within* these categories (for example, 'Sound Archives'), as necessary. Below are two sample questionnaires:

Music Collections

Name of museum:

Status (State, Independent):

No. of items in collection (and in store):

1. How and why do you 'define' your collection - academic, social-historical, local history, craft, performance-centred - or other?

2. Are visitors specialists, laymen or general interest types? Are displays targeted to be popularist, academic etc?

3. Do you make use of musical sound - 'live', recorded or on headsets (or equivalent) in your display? What are the benefits/problems of this?

4. Do you use any practical, hands-on or other interactive exhibits? If so, please explain.

5. Do you have future plans for the development of your musical material?

Cinema, Film and Photography Collections

Name of museum:

Status (State, Independent):

No. of items in collection:

1. Visitors: Specialst, laymen or general interest? Are displays targeted to be popularist, academic etc?

2. Scale of collection: Does your film/photography collection form the whole museum, a department within it or a minor collection?

3. Interpretation: Is your display chronological, thematic or both? Reasons for this:

4. Education: Do you give guided tours, special lectures, workshops etc? Details please:

5. Film as 'transitory' subject: How do you interpret this? Do you have demonstrations, film shows or hands-on activities for visitors? If so, what are the benefits?

6. Development: How long (if at all) have the above features been used in your display? Have you future plans in this area?

7. Technology in displays: If so, what do you use - film, video, computer etc?

8. Audio: What use do you make of sound in the museum environment - Background music, headsets etc?

9. How integral is active 'movement' (film etc.) in your display? In a 'static' display, how would the introduction of movement change it?

10. Visuals in museums: How do you combine viewing static subjects (e.g. a camera) with moving ones (e.g. film) for the visitor?

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